GC KURENAI OUJI 1

KUWAHARA Souta

SE

077

9784757521612

ISBN978-4-7575-2161-2

C9979 ¥390E

1929979003906

雑誌48118-86
定価：本体390円＋税

SQUARE ENIX.

KURENAI OUJI KURENAI

GC ガンガンコミックス

GC KURENAI no OUJI 1

GC ガンガンコミックス

SQUARE ENIX

KURENAI OUJI

Another one of my big dreams has come true the gratifying, yet embarrassing, volume 1 is out! Let's take a slow ride, shall we?

紅の王子

くれないのおうじ

KUREnai ouji

1

Kuwa hara Sou tu

CONTENTS

Chapter 1 ○ Awakening 005

Chapter 2 ○ Gift from Heaven..... 051

Chapter 3 ○ A Stray's Feelings 091

Smile Game 135

KURENAI...
THE GIFT...
I ALONE POSSESS—
SO, YOU HAVE IT WITH YOU FOR REAL TODAY?
Y-YES, I DO.
— THE FUTURE WORLD.

Chapter 1 Awakening

HERE.
THANKS, DUDE. YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN A GOOD BOY AND HANDED IT OVER TO US IN THE FIRST PLACE.
Uh-huh.
WE'LL PAY YOU BACK SOON ENOUGH. WE PROMISE.
HEY, GUYS.
Let's go to the arcade today
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU'RE HAVING FUN.
CAN I JOIN YOU?

WHO ARE YOU?
HUH?
TCH
YIKES!!
UGH!
BANG
Smile

OH.
NOOO!!!
DASH
ACK!
SINCE YOU'RE HERE, MIGHT AS WELL.
PULL

FORGET...
ALL THE NASTY STUFF.
...!
HUH?
WHAT WAS I... DOING?
WHAT...
...?
WERE WE DOING...

...JUST NOW?
MAN, HOW MUCH LOWER CAN HUMANS GET?
TWO EVIL BULLIES AND A WIMP.
JIROU,
IF YOU DON'T KEEP YOUR LITTLE GAMES IN CHECK, THE GUYS IN HEAVEN WILL NOTICE
CUT IT OUT ALREADY
RAT
TLE
HAH!
THIS MUCH WON T HURT

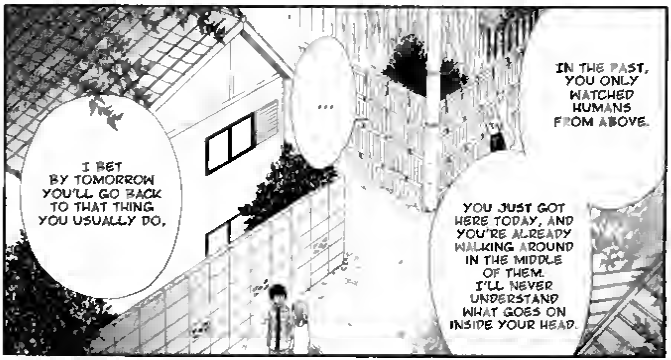
FINE, I GET IT ALREADY. I'LL REMEMBER TO LAY LOW NEXT TIME.
STILL!
IT WAS HARMFUL TO YOU.
Is... Did them from the whole extortion mess.
PLUS, WHAT I JUST DID WASN'T HARMFUL TO THE HUMAN WORLD.
right?
You call that saving?
Gnaw
Gnaw

You little!
AT LEAST LET ME BLOW OFF SOME STEAM.
BUT—
Gii,
YOU'RE SUCH A NAG!
GIVE ME A BREAK I'M ONLY ASKING YOU TO LET ME HAVE FUN FOR A DAY

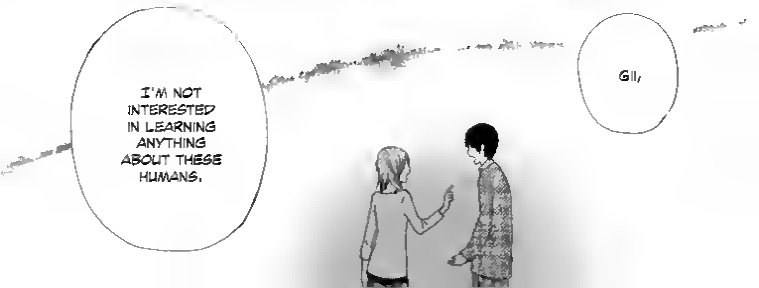
I'M A DEMON.

FWO
I DON'T HAVE TO BEHAVE MYSELF HERE IN THE HUMAN WORLD.
THAT'S WHY...
SHL
COM ON, GIL.
OK.
NEXT...
Ahh ha ha ha ha!
And then
HOW ABOUT THOSE SILLY LOVEBIRDS?

Sneak
Sneak
ARE YOU SURE IT'S OK FOR YOU TO WANDER AROUND DOWN HERE?
OF COURSE! WHAT DO YOU THINK MY HUMAN DISGUISE IS FOR?
Chirp Chirp
Quiet
BESIDES, THE WHOLE "DON'T BLOW YOUR COVER" THING IS GETTING OLD
TAKE A GOOD LOOK. WE'RE IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE.
There's hardly anyone on the streets
For Sale
NO, NO,
THAT'S BESIDE THE POINT!
Hey!
ACTING LOVEY DOVEY IN BROAD DAYLIGHT. WHAT A DISGUSTING SIGHT
HOW SHOULD I BREAK THEM UP?
Newlyweds?
Take away the salesman's love maybe? Or
HUFFER
HUFFER
RUFFLE


I BET BY TOMORROW YOU'LL GO BACK TO THAT THING YOU USUALLY DO.
...
IN THE PAST, YOU ONLY WATCHED HUMANS FROM ABOVE.
YOU JUST GOT HERE TODAY, AND YOU'RE ALREADY WALKING AROUND IN THE MIDDLE OF THEM. I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND WHAT GOES ON INSIDE YOUR HEAD.

IT'S PART OF MY JOB THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT—
BUT YOU SAID YOUR BUSINESS TRIP IS NEXT MONTH!!
WHAT?!
EVEN AFTER LEARNING A THING OR TWO ABOUT THEM—
THAT'S ALL YOU EVER DO!!
YOU EVEN BREAK OUR DATES BECAUSE OF WORK
OH, BOY THAT WAS SUDDEN


I'M NOT INTERESTED IN LEARNING ANYTHING ABOUT THESE HUMANS.
GIL

THEY LET THEIR EMOTIONS RULE THEIR LIVES.
SILLY CREATURES, THAT'S WHAT THEY ARE.
THEY LAUGH AND GET ANGRY OVER SUCH PETTY THINGS.
THEY BASE THEIR ACTIONS, GOOD OR BAD, ON SELF-INTEREST ALONE.
JUST LOOK AT THOSE TWO
THEY WERE ALL SMILES AND HOLDING HANDS JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO
BUT THE MOMENT ONE OF THEM HAS A MOOD SWING...
ALL TOO EASILY
OF THEIR HOLD
THEY LET GO
THEY'RE SO SIMPLE.

HUMANS AREN'T PURE-HEARTED—
JUST...
SELF-CENTERED
THEY'RE SO RIDICULOUS, JUST WATCHING THEM BORES ME
HOW DUMB.
HERE...
IN THIS WORLD,
IN THIS PLACE, I KNOW I WON'T SCREW UP, PERIOD
I SEE.
FINE

I'LL KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT FOR NOW.
GLAD YOU GOT THE MESSAGE.
YOU ALWAYS FUSS OVER THE LITTLE DETAILS.
WHO DO YOU THINK I AM?
Glance
Flash
Flash
Dang, Nurse Sis is making it hard.
AHHH!!!
HUH?
ZIN
G
Bonk

I NEVER, EVER MAKE BLUNDERS
I MEAN ME,
A BRILLIANT—
POW!
"YOU WERE KNOCKED COLD BY A BASEBALL— IN THIS WORLD"
I WON'T SAY ANY-THING...
Hee Hee!
AHHH! Nii-chan!!
W-WE'RE REALLY, REALLY SORRY!!

YOU'D BETTER REMEMBER THE REAL REASON YOU CAME TO THE HUMAN WORLD,
PRINCE KOUJIROU.
SAKURA-KUN, RESULTS OF THE FINALS ARE OUT!
CONGRATS, YOU'RE #1 AGAIN!
#1!
#1!
YOU RE PERFECT AT EVERYTHING YOU DO, SAKURA-KUN. ♡
Forever #2
WHY DO GIRLS ALWAYS THROW THEMSELVES AT HIM?
always, always
I'm...
Sigh
Sigh
Huh?
DO YOU EVEN HAVE TO ASK?
HE HAS LOOKS, BRAINS,
AND BEHAVES LIKE A GENTLEMAN TO THE GIRLS!
Well,
WHAT CINCHES IT IS...
it's just about it takes to get the girls.

.. HE'S A PRINCE OF THE DEMONS.
AS IN, FUTURE KING.
NOW, LET'S NOT MAKE A FUSS OVER THIS, GIRLS.
IT'S ALMOST TIME FOR THE BRIEFING. WE SHOULD GET GOING.
Oh~
IN OTHER WORDS,
STARTING THIS YEAR, GRADUATING STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO UNDERGO A SHORT INTERNSHIP IN THE HUMAN WORLD.
Murmur
Murmur
REMEMBER WHAT I'VE ALWAYS TOLD YOU?

SUCH ABILITIES ARE BOUND TO CATCH THE EYES OF CELESTIALS SOONER OR LATER.
ALTHOUGH WE TEND TO THINK OF HUMANS AS WEAK, FOOLISH CREATURES,
THERE ARE CERTAIN PEOPLE, FOUND ONLY IN THE HUMAN WORLD, WHO POSSESS ABILITIES AND MENTAL POWERS THAT ARE BEYOND OUR IMAGINATIONS
BEFORE THAT HAPPENS,
WE MUST EXTERMINATE THOSE HUMANS.
YES. WE MUST PREVENT THE CELESTIALS, OUR PERENNIAL NEMESES THAT WE WILL INEVITABLY CONFRONT,
THE HUMAN WORLD
FROM JOINING HANDS WITH THEM.
SAKURA-KUN

I would much prefer to be briefed in the same room as the other students.
Well,
I'm afraid that's not possible, your highness.
Your assignment...
will be given to you in a separate room
I trust...
You've been briefed on the short-term internship,
a pre-requisite for the exit examination?
Yes, allow me to summarize the points
1. We are to understand humans inside and out
2. We are to inflict more harm on them than is required by the scope of our assignment
3. The credits obtained in the human world will clear the individual assignments given during the length of our third year in school.
That is all.

AS EXPECTED FROM THE TOP STUDENT OF A SCHOOL IN THE DEMON WORLD
ACTUALLY, A SOLID STUDENT SUCH AS YOU HAS NO REAL NEED OF AN INTERNSHIP, BUT...
EH?
Chuckle
YOU WILL UNDERSTAND WHAT I MEAN AFTER MEETING WITH THE OTHER STUDENTS LATER.
AND HERE IS YOUR ASSIGN-MENT.
...?!
UM...
IS THIS—?
'IN THE NEAR FUTURE, YOU WILL MEET A HUMAN WHO WILL BE A THREAT TO THE DEMON WORLD.'
"YOU MUST FIND AND CLAIM THAT HUMAN'S SOUL."
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN CENTURIES, ENMA-SAMA HAS SPOKEN.
"THE FUTURE IS EVERY-THING."

"THE RED EYES OF KURENAI WILL BE YOUR GUIDE."
THEN. .
TO SUM IT UP,
THIS PROPHECY IS YOUR HIGHNESS'S MISSION.
SAKURA KOUJIROU OUJI*, YOU ARE, AFTER ALL,
THE FUTURE RULER OF THIS LAND, THE HEIR OF KURENAI,
AND THE NEXT IN LINE FOR THE THRONE OF THE DEMON KING.
*Ouji = prince

FOR OUR SAKES
AND FOR YOURS
THE TIME HAS COME.
KURENAI WILL AWAKEN FROM ITS LONG SLUMBER, AND THE LEGEND WILL COME ALIVE ONCE AGAIN. .
BUT...
MY EYES STILL
YOUR HIGHNESS,
THE TARGET'S LOCATION HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED.
JUST..
LEAVE THE REST TO KURENAI.
THAT'S RIGHT.
Flutter

Ho
Blink
THE HUMAN OBSTACLE
AND FIND
I NEED TO HURRY...
VER
?!
WHERE AM I?
WHEW!! HEY, YOU TWO! HE'S UP!
Spring
??
What? Really?!
DASH DASH DASH
DASH
DASH
ARE YOU OK NOW?
I'M SORRY, NII-CHAN!

I TOLD YOU THAT WAS NO PLACE TO PLAY BASEBALL, DIDN'T I?
WE'RE SORRY
WHAT A RELIEF
When
HOW'S YOUR HEAD?!
UH, JUST FINE
WHAT ABOUT YOUR FACE?!!
ALL ALL GOOD
ANYWAY,
AREN'T YOU TWO SUPPOSED TO BE HELPING ME OUT TODAY? TO THE KITCHEN, BOYS
KAY
OH, UM. .
AH!
...
Clock
Um.
SORRY, LET ME GET YOU SOMETHING TO DRINK.
UH, IT'S FINE, REALLY
JUST REST SOME MORE, OK?
"I KNOW I WON'T SCREW UP, PERIOD,"
HUH?
AH! I WAS KNOCKED OUT...
...!
...
Clock
flick
flick

Sigh what a sheltered pampered little prince!
SEE? I TOLD YOU SO
SHUT UP!! SO I LET DOWN MY GUARD A BIT! BUT ONLY BECAUSE I HAVEN'T LET LOOSE IN AGES!!
Sh...
PITY
You can't even enjoy your candy poor thing
Yeah yeah whatever
YOUR HIGHNESS MUST HAVE A REALLY HARD TIME PUTTING ON THE PRINCELY ACT DAY AFTER DAY
LOOK, IT'S NOT LIKE I ENJOY DO-
CLATTER
GAH!
SORRY.
WE DON T HAVE ANYTHING CLASSY LIKE COFFEE IN THE HOUSE
WILL THIS TEA DO?
....!
Tsku
Tsku
Tsku
Tea's timed!
UH, YEAH! YEAH!
THAT WAS A CLOSE CALL

I SEE.
SO YOU'LL BE STAYING IN A DORM AROUND HERE?
YEAH
ONLY 15 AND ALREADY STUDYING ABROAD. HOW COOL IS THAT?
I mean, wow!
YOU... THINK SO?
IS THE HIGH SCHOOL YOU'RE GOING TO NEAR HERE?
WHAT'S WITH THIS GIRL?
MY SCHOOL ENTRANCE CEREMONY IS TOMORROW
Blaaa Blaaa
WE JUST MET BUT SHE'S TOTALLY UNGUARDED WITH ME
ACK!
HUH?

I'M SORRY.
YEP. STILL A LITTLE SWOLLEN
Soft
...?
WHAT WAS THAT?
I KNOW!
HOW ABOUT YOU STAY FOR DINNER? TO MAKE UP FOR WHAT HAPPENED.
I'll be fixing it in a minute
WELL, IT WAS PARTLY MY FAULT I MEAN, THE BALL THAT HIT YOU WAS THE THIRD STRIKE WE NEEDED TO WIN.
For the 2nd place prize
WIN? WHAT?
HANA-NEE!
HUH? MAKE UP FOR WHAT? NO, IT'S OK. YOU DON'T HAVE TO—

GREAT.
JUST PEACHY.
THERE GOES MY CHANCE TO LEAVE.
Sigh
Eek!
WAIT, WAIT! FLIP IT!! COOK THE OTHER SIDE, TOO!!
Um...
Should we take it out?
THE FISH IS BURNING!! WHAT SHOULD WE DO, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?!
CLOSE!
Dash Dash Dash...
WHAT'S WRONG? YOU'RE NOT BEING YOURSELF
Pfff
ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE OK? THESE HUMAN KIDS ARE FREAKING YOU OUT
Uh, I DON'T KNOW...
Sh...
SHUT—
IT'S NOT LIKE...
YOU ACTUALLY KNOW HOW TO USE KURENAI, EITHER...

THERE'S A CERTAIN MAGIC...
IN YOUR RED EYES.
SHUT UP.
I DON'T EVEN BELIEVE IN THEM.
ALL YOU KNOW IS, THE TARGET IS PROBABLY IN THIS AREA, RIGHT?
LOOKING FOR SOMEBODY BASED ON THIS KIND OF BALONEY IS A REAL DRAG
THAT...
NO SWEAT. I'LL FIGURE IT OUT SOMEHOW.
Huh? Seriously?
IS PROOF THAT YOU'RE THE FUTURE KING.
DINNER WAS GREAT!!
Thanks!

Clink
Clink
OK!
Now boys help me clean up
DON'T MENTION IT.
...
It was yummy!
I THINK IN MY HUMAN STUDIES COURSE...
THEY SAID HUMANS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE TREAT THEIR NEIGHBORS LIKE FAMILY OR SOMETHING
But where do I fit into this?
NII-CHAN,
HMM, WHY ARE YOU—?
TODAY'S THE DAY HER GRANDMA GOES TO THE HOSPITAL.
HUH?
DID YOU LIKE NEE CHAN'S COOKING?
OH
YEAH.
WE HAVE DINNER WITH HER ONCE A MONTH.
WHEN HER GRANDMA ISN'T AROUND,
NEE-CHAN IS TOTALLY OH HER OWN

Um...
...
Do you know...
Take care!!
Of a muscleman with crazy super strength...
Or a scholar with a ridiculously high IQ...
Around here?
Oh...
Ok...
Hmm... I don't know anybody like that,
But there are lots of total nuts around.
Uh, no.
I mean...
Hmm...
What the heck?! So much for figuring it out!!
Easy-on remember-ing!!
Shut up!!
It's the first thing that popped into my head!!

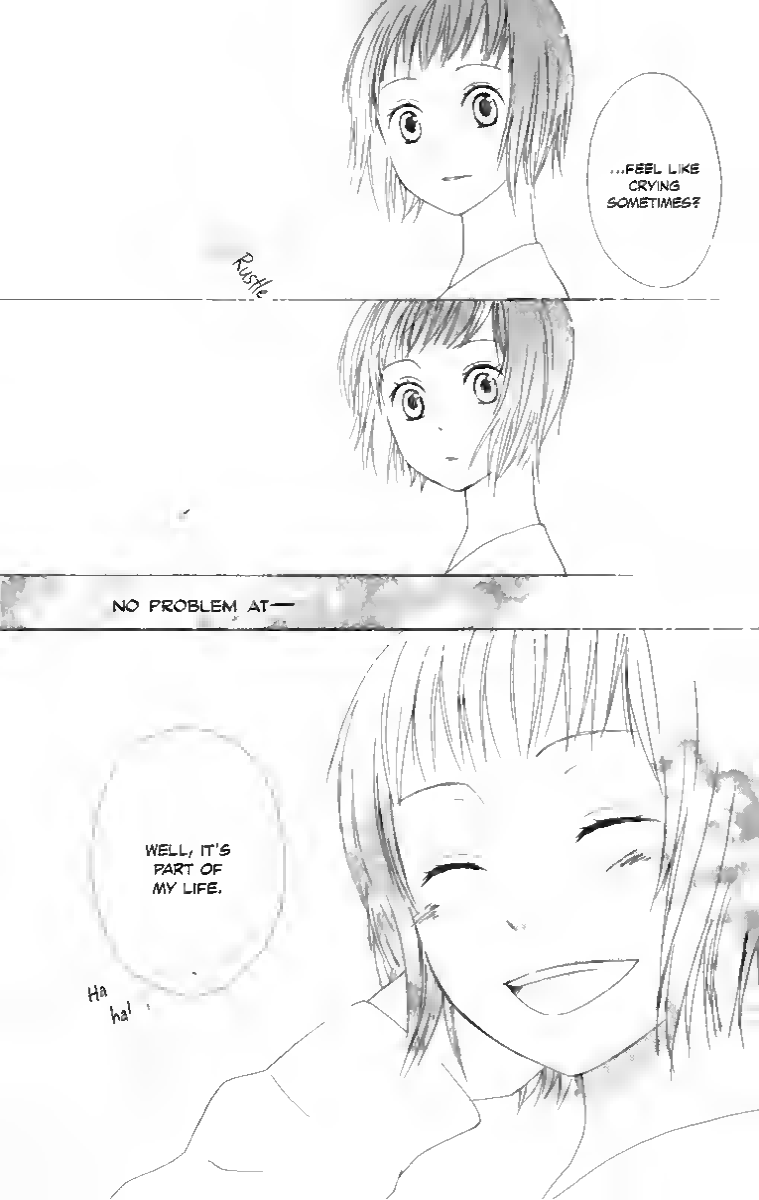
THAT'S NOT
WHAT...
UM...
I WAS TRYING TO SAY...
THANKS FOR DINNER.
THE FOOD WAS... GREAT.
YOU'RE WELCOME.
AH

I DON'T WANT TO THANK A HUMAN, EITHER, ALL RIGHT?
IT'S JUST...
NO! OF COURSE NOT!!
JUST NOW...
WHEN YOU GOT HIT IN THE HEAD, DID IT MESS UP YOUR PERSONALITY?
Are you sure you're OK?
HERE.
A LITTLE GIFT FOR YOU.
HUH?
THE SUCKER YOU HAD WHEN YOU GOT HIT BY THE BALL IS A LOST CAUSE.
OH, THAT...
THE BAG OF CANDY IS REALLY JUST A REPLACEMENT FOR YOUR SUCKER, BUT...
CANDY?
There's a whole bunch
Yeah.
MY FAMILY RUNS A CANDY STORE.

...ENJOY IT ALL THE SAME.
AGAIN.
I'M GETTING...
THOSE STRANGE VIBES FROM HER AGAIN.
NEE-CHAN IS STRONG.
HER DAD HASN'T BEEN AROUND, EITHER.
EVEN NEE-CHAN DOESN'T KNOW WHERE HE IS. SHE SAID SO HERSELF.
HER MOM HAS BEEN IN THE HOSPITAL SINCE FOREVER,
SO NEE-CHAN HAS TO TAKE CARE OF THE HOUSE, THE STORE..., EVERYTHING.

SO SOME HUMANS HAVE IT TOUGH, TOO, HUH?
I FELT SORRY FOR HER
THE LEAST I COULD DO WAS THANK HER.
OH...
HUH?
I HEARD YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH A LOT.
YOU LOOK CHEERFUL.
PEOPLE LIKE HER ARE ALMOST ALWAYS ON THE SIDE OF THE ANGELS.
THAT'S WHY...
MY GRANDMOTHER HASN'T BEEN IN GOOD SHAPE LATELY, EITHER.
MY STRING OF BAD LUCK SO FAR...
BEING THE KIND-HEARTED PERSON SHE IS...
OH!
NAO-CHAN TOLD YOU, HUH?
Honestly!
WELL... I GUESS I HAVE.

...SHE QUIETLY ENDURES IT...
WHAT?
N-no way!
A demon
Jolt
Ha ha ha ha
...MAKES ME SEEM LIKE I'M POSSESSED BY A DEMON OR SOMETHING, HUH?
BOTTLED UP INSIDE
SHE'D LIKE TO SAY...
A GOODY-TWO-SHOES WHO KEEPS ALL THE THINGS
THAT MEANS...
I MEAN, YOU MUST HAVE A WHOLE LIST OF THINGS YOU'D LIKE TO DO, BUT YOU CAN'T.
YOU DON'T HAVE ANY CONTROL OVER YOUR LIFE BECAUSE OF ADULTS AND THEIR PROBLEMS.
DON'T YOU EVER...
I CAN WIPE THAT SMILE OFF HER FACE NO PROBLEM
IF I CAN JUST TAP INTO HER INNERMOST FEELINGS...
YOU DON'T FIND IT A BURDEN?
PARDON?


...FEEL LIKE CRYING SOMETIMES?
Rustle
NO PROBLEM AT—
WELL, IT'S PART OF MY LIFE.
Ha ha!

HUH?
I MEAN, MOPING AROUND DOESN'T EXACTLY SOLVE ANYTHING.
TOUCHY AS ALWAYS, I SEE.
D-DON'T YOU THINK IT'S... IT'S UNFAIR THAT IT ONLY HAPPENS TO YOU?
AT A TIME LIKE THIS HUMANS ARE SUPPOSED TO SHOW SOME INDICATION THAT THEY'RE ABOUT TO CRY! THAT'S WHAT I LEARNED IN HUMAN STUDIES!!
I KNEW IT THE FIRST MOMENT I MET HER. BUT...
WELL, IT'S LIKE MY PURPOSE IN LIFE, I GUESS.
MIGHT AS WELL ENJOY IT, RIGHT? WORKS BETTER THAT WAY.
I'M ALREADY USED TO IT, ANYWAY, SO I'VE NEVER STOPPED TO THINK ABOUT WHETHER MY LIFE IS UNHAPPY OR DIFFICULT.
YEAH.
BESIDES,
I JUST CAN'T READ HER.
SPENDING THE WHOLE TIME CRYING...
Muffled

...WOULD ONLY MAKE MY EYES RED AND PUFFY.
IT WOULDN'T CHANGE ANYTHING.
HMP

"KURENAI..."
HUH?
TWINE
THUMP
WHAT'S GOING ON?
"KNOWS..."
SOME-ONE...
SOME-THING...
THUMP
"...YOUR ANSWER."
I'M LOSING...
MY EYESIGHT.
THUMP
THUMP
THUMP

Thump
I CAN'T SEE...
Thump
A THING.
Thump
THE ONLY THING I CAN SEE...
IN THIS DARK-NESS...
Thump
IS HER.

"KURENAI..."
"KNOWS."

Ugh!
NO...
BUT...
THE LEGEND WILL COME ALIVE ONCE AGAIN.
THE TIME HAS COME
MAYBE ...
Argh!
THERE'S NO WAY.
Thump
OH.
THAT REMINDS ME.
Grasp
Recede
AH...

MY EYESIGHT IS BACK.
WAS SHE THE ONE...
WHO RESTORED IT?
TELL ME YOUR NAME.
YOUR NAME.
WE'LL BE NEIGHBORS, RIGHT? WE MIGHT MEET AGAIN WHO KNOWS?
IF WE DO MEET,
YOU KNOW YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME HERE FOR DINNER.
JUST...
JUST WHAT...?
SO...
ANYWAY,

...REMEMBER THAT, OK?
...!
WHAT'S THIS?
HANG— HANG ON!!
...?
...??
WHAT THE HECK?!
AGAIN?!
Thump
Thump
Thump
Thump

WHO IN THE WORLD IS SHE?!
THINGS ARE JUST GETTING INTERESTING, EH, ♪
Heh heh heh heh.
MY DEAR PRINCE? ♡
MY NAME IS KOUMEDA HANA.
I'M SAKURA KOUJIROU.
THE TIME HAS COME...
FOR YOUR KURENAI TO AWAKEN.

No VACAN-CIES?!!
WHAT?!
Wow, everything fits.
I'M AFRAID SO
JUST A WHILE AGO, A STUDENT TRANSFERRED HERE ON SHORT NOTICE TO DO HIS INTERNSHIP.
AS STATED IN THE INTERNSHIP HANDBOOK.
I'M SORRY,
BUT WE HAVE TO FOLLOW THE RULES ..
SO WHY—?
B-BUT I ALREADY HAD A RESERVATION!

"CHECK-IN FOR THE RESIDENTIAL HALLS MUST BE COMPLETED BY 6PM ON THE DAY BEFORE THE INTERNSHIP COMMENCES."
BONG
'NO LATECOMERS...'
BONG
"ARE ALLOWED TO CHECK IN."
BONG
...
THOSE ARE THE RULES.
LOOK.
IT'S ALREADY 8 O'CLOCK.
I'M...
OUT?
THAT HOMERUN GOT YOU GOOD, HUH?

Chapter 2 Gift from Heaven

WHAT AN EXPERIENCE LAST NIGHT
THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SLEPT IN A HAMMOCK.
YOU STILL SLEPT LIKE A LOG, THOUGH
Jiyou on the previous night
I have a crick in my neck from it
Crick
WHAT,
IN PRINCE MODE ALREADY?
Heh
Grrr
YES
I LEARNED SOMETHING YESTERDAY
Dash Dash Dash Dash
GRR!
EEP!

SAKURA KOUJIROU...

GOOD LOOKING,
INTELLIGENT,
ATHLETIC...
SOMEBODY ABLE TO CARRY OUT THE MISDEEDS ASSIGNED TO HIM WITH STYLE—
— AN ELITE PRINCE OF THE DEMON WORLD,
WHO WILL SHOULDER THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION.

...
...
AND HE...
"IS NOW A HOME-LESS WAIF."
Relax
Hey!!
THAT PART WAS UNCALLED FOR!!
Dum Dum Dum

BACK TO OLD JIROU-SAN.
OOPS, EXCUSE ME.
Cough
YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET BACK AT THAT WOMAN? THAT'S RARE.
Mm?
DEALING WITH HER NOW WOULD BE A WASTE OF TIME.
BESIDES...
NEVER, EVER LET YOUR GUARD DOWN.
YESTER-DAY WAS TRAUMA-TIC, HUH
UNTIL I GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THIS WORLD, I WILL REFRAIN FROM DOING ANYTHING FLASHY.
SO PLEASE, GII-SAN, TRY NOT TO TALK TO ME.
Well
SMART MOVE
YEAH, YEAH

I HAVE AMPLE TIME.
FIRST, I WILL SECURE MY POSITION.
THERE IS NO NEED TO RUSH.
I WILL THEN RISE IN POPULARITY BY PROJECTING AN AIR OF BRILLIANCE AND CORDIALITY,
Morning
everyone
WITHOUT BEING OBNOXIOUS ABOUT IT.
EVENTUALLY, I WILL BECOME A PRESENCE THAT COMMANDS ADMIRATION AND RESPECT FROM EVERYBODY
YES,
THEY WILL ALL PUT THEIR TRUST IN ME.
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF ASSOCIATING MYSELF WITH HUMANS.
BUT BY WINNING THEM OVER, MY JOB WILL BE MADE EASIER.
I WILL HAVE THEIR FULL COOPERATION.

1 - 5
NOW,
LET'S SEE HOW QUICKLY I CAN CAPTIVATE THEM.
Chatter
Chatter
What? Seriously?
Chatter
Ah ha ha ha ha!
Chatter
Chatter
Chatter
Hey, we're in the same class!

AH!

* Arranged according to the syllabary order

The day before
YOU'RE LIKE A WHOLE DIFFERENT PERSON TODAY.
SO YOU WEAR GLASSES?
Just for effect.
Uh...
Yes, sometimes only when I'm in class
OH,
CRAP.
I SEE.
I CAN'T...
JUST OPEN MY MOUTH WITHOUT THINKING.
ARE YOU OK?
WHAT SHOULD I DO?

YOU LOOK PALE.
OH!
ARE YOU NERVOUS?
DON'T WORRY
THERE ARE LOTS OF LOCAL KIDS LIKE ME HERE.
SIGH
I KNOW IT WON'T TAKE LONG FOR YOU TO FIT RIGHT IN.
A DO-GOODER LIKE HER...
IS THE WORST KIND.
Chatter Chatter
AH
HANA!
IZUMI-CHAN!

YAY, SAME CLASS!
UH-HUH!
LISTEN! YOU WON'T BELIEVE THIS!
MMM
SEE, THIS BOY I MET YESTERDAY—
HUH?
HEY, JIROU,
DOES THIS MEAN YOUR GAME IS OVER?
...
NO... I'LL THINK OF SOME COUNTER-MEASURE,
BUT...

THE SERIES OF BLUNDERS ...
REVISITED.
Here. A little gift for you
AND HAD MY WEAKNESS FOR SWEETS EXPOSED
Are you OK?
NURSED BY HER
BONK!
I WAS HIT IN THE HEAD BY A BALL BATTED BY A KID

YOU COULD HAVE ERASED THAT PART OF HER MEMORY LAST NIGHT, AT LEAST
AFTER THAT,
NOTHING HAPPENED...
EVEN WHEN I LOOKED AT HER

HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO ACT PRINCELY IN FRONT OF HER AFTER EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY?
Good morning.
Prince
...
YOU WERE TOTALLY CASUAL YESTERDAY
You're not being natural.

ACTUAL-
LY,
IT WAS
ONLY
FOR THAT
FLEETING
MOMENT
MY HEART
SUDDENLY
WENT WILD.
EVERYTHING
TURNED
BLACK.
SHE...
WAS ALL
I COULD
SEE.
I
JUST...
DIDN'T THINK
IT WAS
NECESSARY.
AND
THEN...
I SIMPLY CAN'T
PICTURE HER
HOLDING
THAT MUCH
POWER.
NOT A MIDGET
LIKE HER
KNOW WHAT
I MEAN?
NOTH-
ING
I DIDN'T THINK
IT WOULD BE
A PROBLEM
IF I LEFT
HER BE.
THAT INCIDENT
YESTERDAY..
WELL, A LOT
HAD HAPPENED,
AND I HADN'T
ADJUSTED TO
THIS WORLD YET.
AH...

I MUST HAVE BEEN A LITTLE LIGHTHEADED BECAUSE I WAS SO TIRED. I MEAN, I MIGHT HAVE LET DOWN MY GUARD, SO...
Sigh
I SEE.
Take care
BUT...
COME TO THINK OF IT,
MY HEART...
Cheerful
THUMP
Gasp
?!
IS STILL RACING... FOR SOME REASON...
I THINK?
Throb
Throb
Throb
Throb
Throb
I PROBABLY AM SICK.
I shouldn't have slept outside.
ACK!
OH.
I HAVE...
Zzzzz
RATS. IT'S RAINING.
IT WAS SO SUNNY, TOO

...AN UMBRELLA
SO...
WHERE ARE YOU HEADED?
GET!
HEY?!
My umbrella?!!
Fsh.
Hhh.
Huh?
WHAT DO YOU HAVE AGAIN?

RIGHT. I FORGOT
STILL HERE, SAKURA-KUN?
HUH?!
SHE'S HERE!!!
AW, IT'S RAINING.
Z
SSH
...
NO CHOICE, I GUESS

RIGHT NOW,
SHE'S THE ONLY ONE I CAN COUNT ON.
SAY,
Zshhh
PARDON?
NO VACANCIES?
NOW ISN'T EXACTLY THE BEST TIME TO GET A PLACE IN THE SCHOOL DORM
UHHH
SO,
THEN...
Bummer...
NONE.
YOU SEE, THIS YEAR THE SCHOOL RECEIVED A LOT OF STUDENTS FROM OUTSIDE THE AREA
I SEE.

I'll check..
They're pretty far though.
With some boarding houses I know later.
Zshhh
Hhhh
Um, sorry for the tr--
Not at all.
Sure, I'm helping you look for a place to stay, but here you are, walking me all the way home.
When in trouble, help each other out, right?
Still, though. How could that residential hall just decide not to give you the room you reserved?
You should file a complaint.
Well...
Uh...
Hana-chan?!

BOY-FRIEND?
YOUR...
OH.
ARE YOU GUYS ON YOUR WAY HOME, TOO?
Z
S
S
B-BOY..
HE'S JUST WALKING ME HOME BECAUSE I DON'T HAVE AN UMBRELLA.
WHAT? NO, NO.

UH... OK.
NEVER MIND THEM.
It's OK— No need to hurry!!
Let's tell everybody about it!
what—
Squeal
Squeal
LET'S SWITCH.
Pat
HUH?
DON'T YOU USUALLY ASK ONE OF YOUR GIRL FRIENDS FOR THAT KIND OF THING?
WELL, THERE'S A REASON I—
AND YOU'RE WALKING TOGETHER, JUST THE TWO OF YOU!♡
Suspicious—
HUH?
N-NO, IT'S OK!
YOU'RE TIRED, AREN'T YOU? HERE, LET ME HOLD THE UMBRELLA.

LOOK! THEY'RE HOLDING HANDS!!
IT'S FINE, REALLY. I'LL—
Grip
YOU GUYS ARE TOO DATING!!
LOOK,
NO, WE'RE NOT JEEZ!
I DO THIS...

OH, GEE.
GOT IT?
SORRY, SAKURA-KUN.
These kids just wouldn't stop
Ah ha ha.
. SO I CAN TAKE MY TURN HOLDING THE UMBRELLA. THAT'S ALL.
HEY,
WAIT A MINUTE, SAKURA-KUN!!
SHHH
HEY!!
WHAT'S WRONG, JIROU?

YEAH...
YEAH,
BUT..
AND YOU'RE WALKING TOGETHER, JUST THE TWO OF YOU!
THEY'RE HOLDING HANDS!!
...
ISN'T THIS YOUR DEPARTMENT?
YOU GUYS ARE TOO DATING!!
IT'S KIND OF..

...KIND OF...
DIFFER-ENT...
THAN USUAL.
AH, THAT'S IT.
YOU HAVE NEVER...
BEEN TEASED BEFORE.

NOT TO YOUR FACE.
OH,
LOOK!
IT'S SAKURA OUJI AND MARIE-SAN FROM CLASS A.
Whisper
Whisper
THEY SEEM TO BE GETTING IT ON, THOSE TWO BRAINIACS.
I HATE TO ADMIT IT, BUT THEY LOOK GOOD TOGETHER.
Sigh
I TOTALLY ENVY MARIE-SAN.

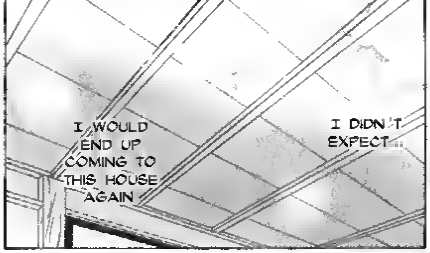
WHAT WOULD YOU DO .. IF THEY WERE REALLY GOING OUT?
WHAT?
NAH. THERE'S JUST NO WAY.
YOU KNOW WHY, RIGHT?
YEAH, YEAH.
BECAUSE HE'S A PRINCE.

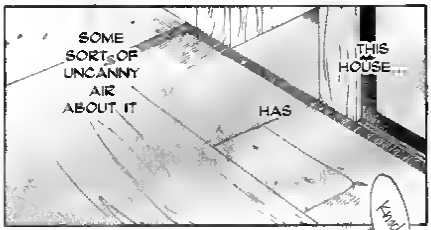
A COMMONER IS JUST NOT CUT OUT FOR HIM, YOU KNOW?
SO TRUE!
Z
S
s
h
h

UM, SORRY
DRENCHED
DRIP
DRIP
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, STOP SAYING THAT!
JUST CHANGE YOUR CLOTHES!
Or you'll catch a cold

FLUT-
HERE'S A TOWEL.
tap
DRY YOURSELF OFF AND THEN GET CHANGED, KAY?

Clap
THE PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD...
DON'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT WHO I AM.
THAT SHOULD BE THE CASE, THOUGH.
Sp
Legg
WHETHER I'M A PRINCE OR WHATEVER...
IT DOESN'T MATTER HERE.

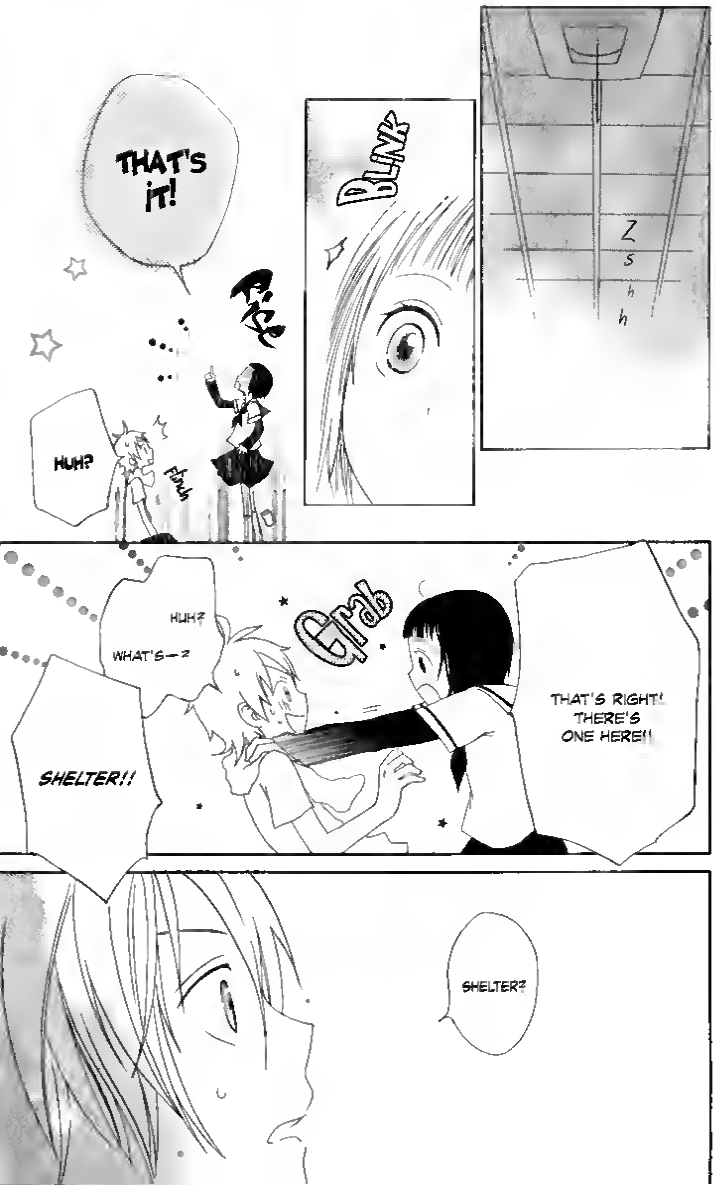

I WOULD END UP COMING TO THIS HOUSE AGAIN
I DIDN'T EXPECT...


SOME SORT OF UNCANNY AIR ABOUT IT
HAS
THIS HOUSE...

Kwak
Kwak
Flap
Slide
THE KIND THAT'S A LITTLE SWEET...
AND MAKES YOU DROWSY ...
ARE YOU DONE CHANGING?
S-SORRY!
NOT YET!
OH, I'M SORRY.
Thump
Thump
Thump

Zsssshh
YES.
OH, IS THAT SO?
YES, I UNDER-STAND.
Beep
THEY SAID THEY CAN'T TAKE A LONG-TERM BOARDER WHO'S IN HIGH SCHOOL.
I DON'T KNOW WHERE ELSE TO ASK IN THIS AREA.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
WH-
UH.
REALLY.

Z
s
s
h
THE RAIN..
HAS GOTTEN HEAVIER.
MEANS...
GETTING WET AGAIN.
NO SHELTER..
h
h
NO SHELTER..
MEANS.
TROUBLE.


THAT'S IT!
HUH?
Push
BLINK
Z
S
h
h
Grab
HUH?
WHAT'S—?
SHELTER!!
THAT'S RIGHT! THERE'S ONE HERE!!
SHELTER?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
HUH?
RIGHT ABOVE US! THE SECOND FLOOR!
WHAT ABOUT IT?
HUH?
HERE'S THE THING.
THIS PLACE, .
USED TO BE A BOARDING HOUSE,
THE ENTIRE SECOND FLOOR.
IN OTHER WORDS,
THERE ARE PLENTY OF ROOMS AVAILABLE.

WHY...
DO YOU GO OUT OF YOUR WAY?
WHY?
YOU CAN STAY HERE IF YOU WANT!
UH, .
H-HANG ON
I MEAN,
WE JUST MET YESTERDAY
WE BARELY KNOW ANYTHING -
ABOUT EACH OTHER.
YOU DON'T EVEN KN—

YOU SHARED YOUR UMBRELLA WITH ME.
TODAY, THANKS TO YOU,
I DIDN T GET DRENCHED IN THE RAIN.
I WASN T SHIVERING, AND I DIDN'T CATCH A COLD. .
BECAUSE YOU WERE THERE FOR ME.
I WANT TO .
RETURN THE FAVOR...
Sly

FLUFF
...AND GIVE YOU...
SHELTER.
!
MAKE SURE...
YOU DRY YOUR HAIR.
OR YOU'LL CATCH A COLD, ONII-SAN.

I PROBABLY ALREADY CAUGHT ONE.

BECAUSE I'VE BEEN FEELING...

THE SKIES ARE CLEAR AGAIN.

MY FACE BURNING UP AND MY EYELIDS GETTING WARM...

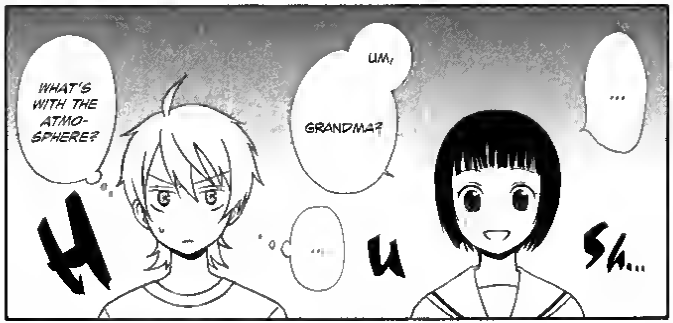
FOR SOME TIME NOW.

GOOD MORNING,
YOUR HIGHNESS.
YES,
GOOD MORN-ING.
EVERYBODY IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DIVISION SEEMS TO BE IN HIGH SPIRITS TODAY...
AS USUAL.
Whee!
Morning!!
Hahaha!
Morning!
AH, SAKURA OUJI!
DON'T FORGET YOUR GREETINGS, EVERYONE!
GOOD MORNING, YOUR HIGHNESS!
Good morning!

Ha ha ha ha ha!
Snap
...
Hee hah!
Wait up!
HOW I'D LOVE TO STRIP THOSE LITTLE BRATS OF THEIR ENERGY.
TALK ABOUT A NOISY MORNING
C'mon, guys!!
Dash Dash Dash
KNOCK KNOCK
!
Flinch
ARGH.
I NEED TO GET UP ANYWAY, DAMN IT.
Pab Pab
Cry

OH,
YOU'RE UP.
I'm going to ask out the future.
MORNING, JIROU.
...
MORNING.

Chapter 3 A Stray's Feelings


WHAT'S WITH THE ATMOSPHERE?
UM, GRANDMA?
...
...
H U Sh...

JUST BECAUSE YOU FEEL SORRY FOR THEM DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN PICK THEM UP AND BRING THEM INTO THE HOUSE!!
Abandoned dogs stray cats wild raccoons goodness knows what else! Good grief!
AM I BEING TREATED LIKE A PET?!!
!!

SHANA!
SLAM
?!
JUMP
WHAT DO I KEEP TELLING YOU?!

NOBODY'S USING THE SPARE ROOMS ANYWAY.
BUT...
SAKURA-KUN IS IN A FIX HERE!
BESIDES, THIS USED TO BE A BOARDING HOUSE THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANY PROBLEM, RIGHT?
...
I CAN'T ARGUE WITH YOU THERE.
SIGH
OH, ALL RIGHT. HE CAN STAY. I'M NOT THAT HEARTLESS.
OH,
THANK YOU VERY-
BUT...
HUH?
THERE ARE CONDITIONS, BOY.

BLAZE
AS FOR YOU, HANA, DON'T GO EASY ON HIM EVEN IF HE IS YOUR CLASSMATE!!
OK...
DEFY ME, AND I'LL KICK YOU OUT IN A HEARTBEAT!
IN THIS HOUSE, MY WORD IS LAW.
BLAZE
OK...

RAH!
CLEANING, GROCERY SHOPPING, AND MINDING THE STORE!!
YOU WILL HELP US WITH ALL THE CHORES--
RAH!
THE "ME, ME, ME" ATTITUDE WILL NOT BE TOLERATED HERE!
RAH!
SINCE WE'LL BE LIVING UNDER ONE ROOF, WE'LL TREAT ONE ANOTHER LIKE FAMILY!!
WE ARE NOTHING LIKE OTHER BOARDING HOUSES OUT THERE, GOT THAT?!
RAH!

?
Stop what?
AND...
STOP THAT!!
DON'T WORRY, SAKURA-KUN!
You'll get used to it in no time!!
Cheer
Hm?
Oh!

HUH?
STARTING TODAY, WE'RE FAMILY. IT'S ONLY NATURAL.
No SURNAMES ALLOWED IN THIS HOUSE.
Point
Keujirou? Tadaima. Don't you have a nickname?
Well, um..
...
YEAH.
THAT'S RIGHT.
I LOOK FORWARD TO HAVING YOU HERE,
um...
JIROU.
Can I call you Hi-ni?
HUH?!
Pat
SHE SURE ADJUSTED QUICKLY!!!

YOU CAN CALL ME HANA.
B-BUT-
NO BUTS!!
YES MA AM!
THE REST...
IS HISTORY...
Zshhhh
Splash
Rumble
Rumble
Rumble
SHEESH. WHAT A PAIN.
Sigh
LOOKING GOOD.
PRINCE I-CAN-DO-LAUNDRY ♡
Pfft
Rumble
Rumble
GEE, THANKS A LOT!

I'M SURE YOU'D PREFER TO DO YOUR OWN LAUNDRY!
The washing machine's over there.
HUH?
I would?
OBVIOUSLY, I HAD NEVER DONE LAUNDRY IN MY LIFE. SO
?
OPEN
YOU DON'T KNOW?
Pfft, typical princess.
HOW DO YOU OPERATE THIS?
...
"WASHING MACHINE"
NEXT, PUT IN SOME OF THAT POWDER— HEY, NOT THE ENTIRE BOX!
Stupid!
FIRST, LOAD YOUR CLOTHES.
Rustle
CLOTHES
Rustle
DON'T CALL ME STUPID!
Pow—
Zshhh...
WAIT, WAIT!
Pow
THIS ONE?
THEN, FLICK THAT SWITCH ON—

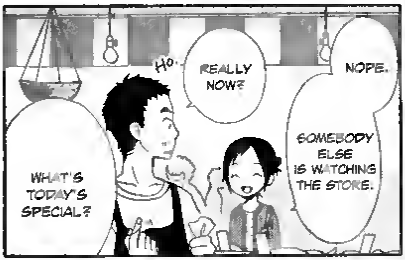
SLIDE
SAKU-
I MEAN, JIROU,
TAKE YOUR UNIFORM.
TO-
BUBBLE
BUBBLE BUBBLE
WAH?!
YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME I WAS SUPPOSED TO CLOSE THE LID!!
YOU'RE ACTUALLY STUPID
Rumble
Rumble
Huh?
Let me think... I don't remember it
SOMETHING LIKE THAT HAPPENED?
Dash Dash Dash Dash
YES, IT DID HAPPEN
Rumble
Rumble
JIROU!
Peek
TODAY YOU'LL BE DOING YOUR FIRST JOB.
HUH?
Rumble
Bop

I'M GOING TO DO SOME SHOPPING.
SO CAN YOU LOOK AFTER THE STORE?
squeal
squeal
Ah ha ha ha
Mommy, that's for kids!
I want that!
150 YEN
HUH?
IS SHE TELLING ME TO DEAL WITH THESE DUMB HUMANS ON MY OWN?!
DON'T WORRY. THE CUSTOMERS ARE MOSTLY KIDS. YOU'LL GET USED TO THEM.
Oh oh
HEY, WAIT-
WELL, I'M OFF.
"DON'T WORRY." OR "YOU'LL GET USED TO IT."
...
ALWAYS THE SAME WORDS.

I, FOR ONE, DON'T INTEND TO.
Sigh
WAS I TOO PUSHY?
I'M SORRY.
BUT...
TO BE HONEST...
I JUST DON'T KNOW...
I CAN'T THINK OF ANY OTHER WAY.

OH, HELLO.
welcome
YOU DON'T USUALLY DO YOUR SHOPPING THIS EARLY.

...THE BEST WAY TO HANDLE IT.
HAN-CHAN?


NOPE.
REALLY NOW?
Ho
SOMEBODY ELSE IS WATCHING THE STORE.
WHAT'S TODAY'S SPECIAL?

TODAY'S? THESE HERE.
These mackerel just came in. Fresh!
HMM, THREE OF THOSE, PLEASE.
COMING RIGHT UP— THREE?

DINNER WITH THE BOYS AGAIN?
NO, THAT WAS LAST WEEK.
You brought three last time.
DOESN'T THAT MAKE THE THIRD ONE AN EXTRA? DID YOU PICK UP ANOTHER STRAY?
Thoughts
Ah ha ha

MUST HAVE BECOME ATTACHED TO YOU AFTER YOU PROVIDED FOOD.
WHEN DID THE NEW ONE JOIN YOU?
ARE YOU GOOD FRIENDS ALREADY?
...
SOMETHING LIKE THAT, I GUESS.
Here's your change.
OH?
Something like that?
I'M PROBABLY..
THE ONLY ONE...
WHO WANTS TO BE FRIENDS.

AH!
UGH...
AGAIN!
CLANG
THIS RED EYE—
Throb Throb Throb.
Pecock
...?

MY APOLOGIES, LADIES.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERN.
I'M FINE NOW.
HEY, ARE YOU OK?
THE PAIN'S GONE?
Ooh
Ah ha ha ha ha
Mommy you bought too much!
...

THAT WAS...
IT ONLY LASTED A SECOND,
BUT IT FELT THE SAME AS IT DID THE OTHER DAY.
WHAT THE HELL...
MAYBE ONE OF THOSE LADIES IS YOUR TARGET?
NO WAY.
IS THE DEMONIC RED EYE...
Which one would you like? I prefer the one on the right
Whichever. Doesn't matter
TRYING TO TELL ME?
WELL, IT'S A BIT AWKWARD.
HE SEEMS TO BE HOLDING BACK.
IT'S WEIRD HAVING TO BE SO CAREFUL AROUND EACH OTHER.
SO IT'S MALE, EH?
Hmm...

HE MUST BE TIRED, I GUESS,
FROM LIVING IN A STRANGER'S HOME AND ALL.
WELL, MAYBE I'M BEING TOO NOSY AND ANNOYING
HE PROBABLY THINKS I SHOULD MIND MY OWN BUSINESS.
STILL...
I HOPE HE'LL ADAPT. THE SOONER, THE BETTER.
IF ANY-THING,
I TRY TO BE HIS FRIEND. I HOPE TO BE HIS FRIEND.
THAT'S ALL I'VE BEEN THINKING.

I'VE BEEN TRYING TO CHEER HIM UP, BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM TO BE WORKING.
THAT'S WHY...
"I LOOK FORWARD TO HAVING YOU HERE, JIROU!"
SINCE THAT DAY...
HE HASN'T ONCE CALLED OUT TO ME.
I'VE BEEN FEELING LIKE...
IT MAKES ME THINK THAT...
HE'S PUTTING UP A FRONT WITH ME OR SOMETHING.
I'M THE EVIL ONE FOR EVEN THINKING ABOUT
THOSE KINDS OF THINGS

EH?
THIS ISN'T LIKE YOU.
HANA-CHAN,
THAT'S EXACTLY WHY..
THEY'RE BITTER AND UNTRUSTING, THE LOT OF THEM.
THE THING ABOUT STRAYS IS, THEY TEND TO BE HEAVILY GUARDED AT FIRST.
WELL, I DON'T KNOW THE DETAILS, BUT I'LL GIVE YOU MY TWO CENTS.
YOU SEE...
DON'T STOP EVEN WHEN IT SEEMS TO BE ANNOYING HIM OR STARTS A FIGHT.
YOU SHOULDN'T STOP BEING NOSY.

IF YOU GET INTO A FIGHT, DON'T CLOSE THE DOOR ON HIM. KEEP IT OPEN AND UNLOCKED.
...IF YOU DON'T FORCE THROUGH WITH ALL YOU'VE GOT, YOU CAN'T BREAK DOWN HIS WALLS.
KEEP DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
A STRAY MAY APPEAR TO BE FINE ON HIS OWN, BUT.
THE TRUTH IS,
HE DOESN'T MIND...
GETTING THE ATTENTION.
AS LONG AS THE DOOR'S OPEN TO WELCOME HIM BACK...

"WELCOME BACK."
. .HE S HAPPY, YOU KNOW?
"I'M HOME."
"LET'S EAT."
Click
"MORNING."
Here, a gift.
THAT'S UP TO YOU, HANA-CHAN.
Pop
WELL,
IF YOU ASK ME...
...
I SEE. TRY TO GET HIM TO THINK THAT, HUH?
Yoshi's Fish

THE WAY TO A MALE'S HEART IS THROUGH HIS STOMACH!
HAVING SOMEONE FIX YOUR DINNER AND WAIT FOR YOU WITH A SMILE MAKES YOUR DAY.
...SMILING AS USUAL WILL WORK.
I SEE
Ah ha
OH, REALLY?
IT SHOULDN'T BE...
"I TRY TO BE FRIENDS."
you bet!
RIGHTO!
IT'S...
"I WANT TO BE FRIENDS..."
Is that so? Is he an American short-hair? Persian?
Huh?
Well, he's from another country. To be honest... I don't know what sort of food he likes

BUT FIRST...
ASK EACH OTHER...
ABOUT LOTS OF THINGS
HANA-CHAN,
OF COURSE WE DON'T KNOW THE FIRST THING ABOUT EACH OTHER.
WHICH IS WHY...
WE SHOULD...
WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT GOOD FRIENDS GETTING INTO FIGHTS ALL THE TIME IS TRUE.
I MEAN, PEOPLE CAN ONLY ARGUE WITH THOSE THEY CAN BE HONEST WITH,
RIGHT?
GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO WANT TO FIGHT EACH OTHER!
You're dealing with a cat though, so that's probably taking it too far.

WHAT HE WANTS FOR DINNER TO-MOR-ROW
I'LL ASK HIM...
FIRST OFF,
I'LL DO THAT.
YEAH,
HEY, YOU!!
WHAT IS THIS?
COME ON, GUYS!!
THE ONE THEY WERE TALKING ABOUT?
HEY, THAT THE GUY?
MUST BE HIM ALL RIGHT!
Whoosh
Whoosh
Whoosh
Whoosh
Whoosh

Explain yourself!!
Hmm
huh
YOU'RE HANA-NEE'S BOY-FRIEND?!
SO...
?!
Cute
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA, YOU BRATS?!
WHISPER
AND A SHRIMP
HE'S GOOD-LOOKING ENOUGH
In a dumb way though
THEY SAID HE LOOKS LIKE A PRINCE.
Mika and her friend did
NO MISTAKE
That's the guy
I CAN HEAR YOU.
You shrimp!
WHISPER
WHISPER
WHISPER
FWUP

EAT THIS!!
CO-
You bet we won't!!
SHUT UP! WE WON'T ACCEPT YOU COHABITATING WITH HANA-NEE!!
SPLASH!
Two-timer! Cheater!
ah ha ha ha
WE'LL TELL HER YOU WERE TRYING TO IMPRESS OTHER GIRLS!

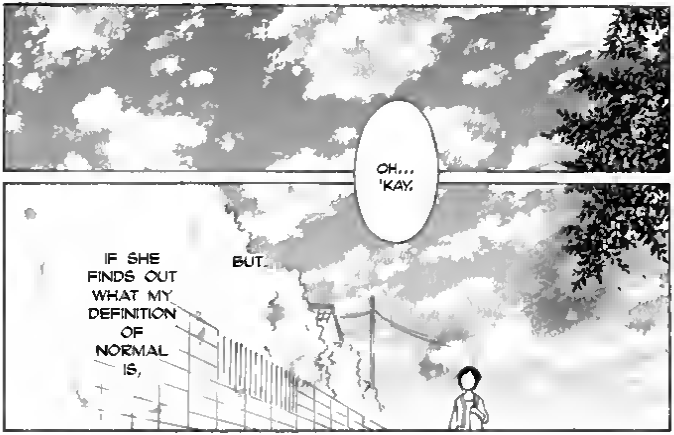
YOU FREAKING LITTLE BRATS!
Wah!
Run—
Yikes!
Ah ha ha ha
THIS IS WHY HUMANS—
WHY,
TSK!
THINK I'LL LET YOU GET AWAY?
Fwp
Gasp
Hol
d

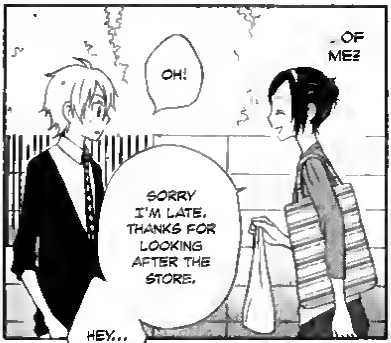
ah ha ha ha!
WHY'D YOU STOP?
NO REASON.
I SHOULDN'T BE BOTHERED BY THOSE STUPID KIDS.
THEY'RE JUST RIDICULOUS.
JIROU.
YOU'RE NOT A PRINCE HERE, YOU KNOW
YOU'RE LIKE ANY OTHER ORDINARY HUMAN

THINGS ARE JUST SO DIFFERENT...
SO NOBODY'S GOING TO GIVE YOU SPECIAL TREATMENT
OTHER PEOPLE SEE YOU THAT WAY AND TREAT YOU...
FOR WHO YOU ARE...
"PRINCE"
"YOUR HIGHNESS"
"SAKURA OUJI-SAMA"
THAT MEANS...

IT'S OK FOR YOU TO GET MAD AND ALL RILED UP...
LIKE A NORMAL PERSON
...THAN WHAT I'M USED TO.
TRUTHFULLY,
BUT—
I DON'T HAVE A CLUE...
HOW TO ACT.
NO NEED TO THINK ABOUT IT.
I BET THEY DON'T GIVE A DAMN

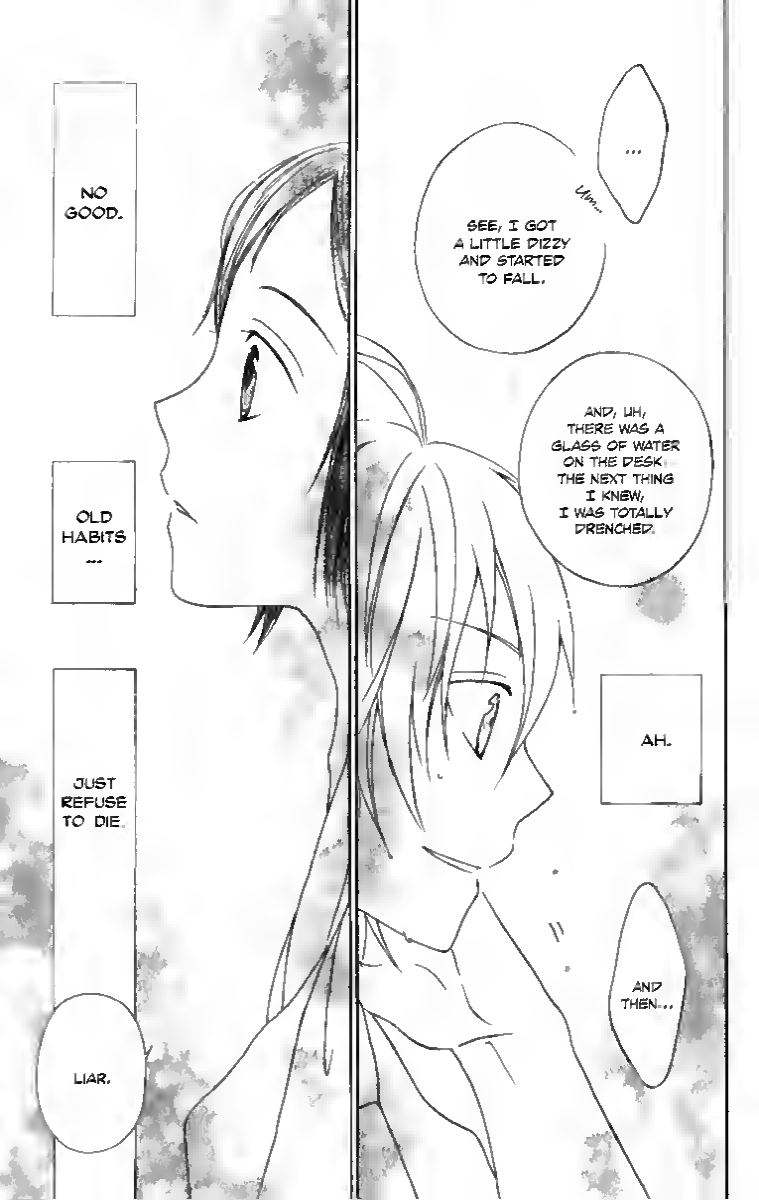
"STARTING TODAY, WE'RE FAMILY."
"IT'S ONLY NATURAL."
EVERYBODY HERE JUST APPROACHES ME FREELY, RUDELY.
YOU THINK IT'S NORMAL FOR TOTAL STRANGERS TO BECOME "FAMILY"...
OUT OF THE BLUE?
WHAT IS NATURAL HERE?
MORNING, JIROU
BEATS ME
BUT TO THEM IT'S PERFECTLY NORMAL


OH...
'KAY.
IF SHE FINDS OUT WHAT MY DEFINITION OF NORMAL IS,
BUT...


OF
ME?
OH!
SORRY I'M LATE. THANKS FOR LOOKING AFTER THE STORE.
HEY...

WHAT WILL SHE THINK...
I'm back.

YOU'RE DRIPPING WET!
AH...
wah!


NO GOOD.
OLD HABITS ...
JUST REFUSE TO DIE.
LIAR.
...
Um...
SEE, I GOT A LITTLE DIZZY AND STARTED TO FALL.
AND, UH, THERE WAS A GLASS OF WATER ON THE DESK. THE NEXT THING I KNEW, I WAS TOTALLY DRENCHED.
AH.
AND THEN...

Squirt
WHAT IF I CAUGHT A COLD OR SOME—?!
NOT YOU, TOO!!
You little—!
How did you get your hands on this anyway?!
Grab
AH.
FINALLY SHOWING YOUR TRUE FEELINGS♡
N-
Drip
LIARS GET PUNISHED.
Drip
!
JUST LIKE WHAT I HEARD FROM THE KIDS
Slap
BUT...

SMILING AS USUAL...

WILL DO.

YOU HAVE A MEAN STREAK. YOU KNOW THAT?
What do you mean, fun?
KEEP DOING WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
...What?
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR THAT FROM YOU.
...
ANYWAY,
WHEN WE'RE AT HOME I WANT YOU TO CALL ME BY MY FIRST NAME

IS THAT OK?
...
GOTCHA.
BUT...
NOT AT SCHOOL, ALL RIGHT?
Being up and told to use first names is just...
It's only to be expected
OF COURSE NOT AT SCHOOL. WOULDN'T WANT THEM TO GET THE WRONG IDEA, RIGHT?
YOUR DAUGHTER PICKED UP ANOTHER STRAY WHILE YOU WEREN'T AROUND.
Yeah, well not that I mind so much.

Click
GOOD GRIEF.
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH HER.
DOESN'T SHE REMIND YOU OF SOMEONE,
HMM,
SAKURA?
WHAT? NO NEED FOR—
COME ON! PRACTICE, PRACTICE!
...

Ran in *Monthly Shounen Gangan*, issues May to July 2007

Hana-Chan.
Jirou-kun.
Mm. Yes!
I, 2...
!!
Ah ha ha ha ha ha ha ha
NO CAN DO! YOU SOUNDED TOTALLY FORCED!!
I ONLY SAID IT THE WAY YOU WANTED IT!!
You said Hana-san sounded so cute!!
Kame-ya
I GUESS NORMAL IS THE WAY TO GO.
Let's start over
I LOOK FORWARD TO HAVING YOU HERE, JIROU.
WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE FOR DINNER TOMORROW?
...

ANYTHING'S FINE...
HANA.
DON'T GIVE ME THAT.
WHAT?!
ABSOLUTELY NO HESITATING!
I eat virtually anything
What a lie! Just yesterday...

KURENAI YUJI

The following is the one-shot pilot for Kurenai Ouji. So before you start reading this story, please forget the two lead characters of the main story. I hope you can enjoy Jirou and Hana's interactions in this version, too, even if they are slightly different from what you've been reading.

A WARM, FUZZY STORY FOR THIS WINTER

WHAT'S WRIGGLING ON THIS BOY'S MIND THAT HE'S SPACING OUT ON THE JOB?

I DON'T CARE.
IF THIS FEELING .
IS REAL OR FAKE.
A.K.A. THE "ULTIMATE OBSTACLE."
THIS IS DEFINITELY THE FINAL EXAM—
AS LONG AS YOU SMILE FOR ME NOTHING ELSE MATTERS.
HEY QUIT SNATCHING THE CUSTOMER'S FOOD!
SORRY

A 50-page special one-shot! Smile Game

A happy, merry 50-pager!

スマイル・ゲーム

SMILE GAME

Your smile is so, so far away

If I stretch out my hand will I reach it?

A promising author's debut in the main magazine!

Kuwahara Souta

I DON'T CARE...
IF THIS FEELING ..
IS REAL OR FAKE
A.K.A. THE "ULTIMATE OBSTACLE."
THIS IS DEFINITELY THE FINAL EXAM—
AS LONG AS YOU SMILE FOR ME, NOTHING ELSE MATTERS.
HEY, QUIT SNATCHING THE CUSTOMER'S FOOD!
SORRY.

スマイル・ボール

Here you go.
One strawberry parfait and one caramel tea!☆
Look!
It's Sakura-kun!♡
Jirou-kun, come and take our orders, too~♡
Coming!
Just give me a moment, ladies.♡
Beam
Munkay!
Jirou-kun over here!
It's all good! He's bringing in business, right, boss?♡
It's truly a godsend that such a sweet boy joined us before winter break.♡
Our only remaining problem is...
Wow, ever since Jirou started working here...

GIVEN HER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES, I DECIDED TO HIRE HER, BUT...
I'm sorry
what? I can't hear you
HER LACK OF SOCIAL SKILLS SHOCKS ME!!
THAT GIRL IF ONLY SHE'D DO SOMETHING ABOUT HER ATTITUDE
AH, KOUMEDA-SAN?
Shaune
HMM, IF YOU LOOK CLOSELY, THOUGH, SHE'S KIND OF PRETTY.
SHE'S JUST A PRETTY FACE, HUH.
THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE SMILE CAFÉ, YOU KNOW!
I MEAN, SMILE! SHE DOESN'T LIVE UP TO OUR NAME AT ALL!
THERE, THERE
MAN, WHAT CAN I DO?
Crash!
AH!
Shatter
Eek! What are you doing?!

ARE YOU OK?
HOW MANY TIMES ALREADY THIS WEEK?
ACK, SHE'S DONE IT AGAIN.
SHE'S TOO MUCH OF A KLUTZ.
SIGHHH...
You'd better've cleaned up this clean!
COME ON, LET'S CLEAN THIS UP REAL QUICK, kay?
Clink.
I'M...
I'M SORRY
NO PROB
AGAIN.
SMART BOY. ♡
Awww~ ♥
What a gentleman! ♡
NICE GOING, JIROU.
You're dirt.
Ack. We're going to need a broom.

"I'M SORRY."
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, JIROU?
YOU'VE ONLY GOT A FEW DAYS LEFT, YOU KNOW? AT THIS RATE—
ARGH!
I KNOW! I'M TRYING TO COME UP WITH SOMETHING HERE!!
PISS!
PISS!
PISS!
JUST SHUT YOUR TRAP, YOU!
OOH, I'M SCARED
YOU NEED MORE CALCIUM AND LESS SUGAR
IT'S OK.
I'LL DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT. YOU'LL SEE.
I KNOW...
I CAN.
YEAH.
DANG. IT'S SURE NOT CALLED "FINAL EXAM" FOR NOTHING.
CAN'T HAVE IT EASY
IT'S EITHER GRADUATE WITH TOP HONORS OR REPEAT—
SHUT UP.

I CAN.
Ah ha ha
FOR REAL?
HOT STUFF, THAT.
Ha ha ha
ALL RIGHT.
LET'S DO ANOTHER TEST RUN TODAY.
Ah ha ha
YOU'RE BEING SERIOUS AS ALWAYS
'COURSE I AM.
I'M ONLY EQUIPPED WITH A SINGLE SHOT FOR THE REAL DEAL.
READY?
AYE, AYE, SIR.

ZIING
GIGGLE
SMILE
GIGGLE
GIGGLE
GIGGLE
CRET

YEAH.
WAS THAT COOL OR WHAT?
...
THAT'S QUITE A PILE THERE
I GUESS...
HEY, MEGUMI? WHAT'S WRONG?
I DON'T NEED THESE STUPID SMILES.
THE ONLY ONE YOU NEED IS HERS
...
"THE TOP STUDENT IN THE DEMON WORLD SCHOOL HAS PROVEN HIMSELF"

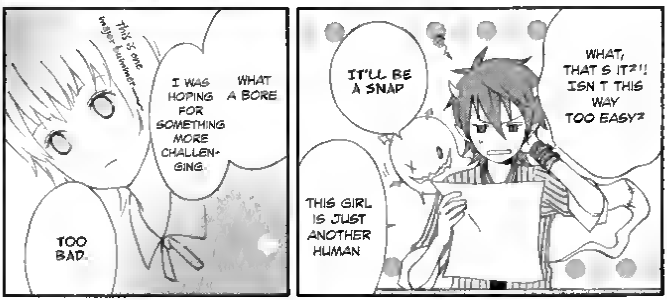
SAKURA KOUJIROU-KUN...
TOOK A MERE 3 DAYS TO INTERCEPT AS MANY AS 100 DELIVERIES OF HAPPINESS MADE BY THE CELESTIALS
HIS RECORD WITH PRANKS IS FLAWLESS, TOO!
HE IS TRULY A MODEL DEMON.
THANK YOU.
THE FINAL IS AROUND THE CORNER.
ALL OF YOU SHOULD EMULATE HIM AND DO YOUR BEST.
Yes, ma'am!
I HAVE IT
YOUR ASSIGN-MENT FOR GRADUA-TION
Here
Float
OH,
THANKS.

SPREAD
SPREAD
SPREAD
YOU MEAN, SPREADING PICTURES OF THE PRINCE OF THE ANGELS FROM WHEN HE WAS CAVORTING ALL OVER THE COUNTRY?
WOW!!!
Ahahaha!
THAT GUY DIDN'T LOOK VERY ANGELIC BACK THEN.
WELL,
NOBODY ELSE COULD HAVE DONE WHAT I DID.
For starters, sneakers are the cultural symbol of freedom & independence.
YOU'RE REALLY SOMETHING
IF YOU KEEP THIS UP, YOU'LL GRADUATE AT THE TOP OF THE CLASS
I AM BRILLIANT.
LAST WEEK'S PRANK IN PARTICULAR WAS A STROKE OF GENIUS, WASN'T IT?

ALL RIGHT. WHAT KIND OF CHALLENGE ARE THEY GIVING ME, THE GENIUS HEAD OF THE CLASS?
Let's see...
EVERYBODY GETS A DIFFERENT ONE, BASED ON THEIR ABILITIES
Oh, yeah
NEVER MIND THAT HURRY AND TELL ME WHAT YOUR ASSIGNMENT IS

BY THE 22ND DEMON WORLD TIME,
NIGHT OF THE RED MOON...
WHAT THE HECK?
WHAT'S WRONG?

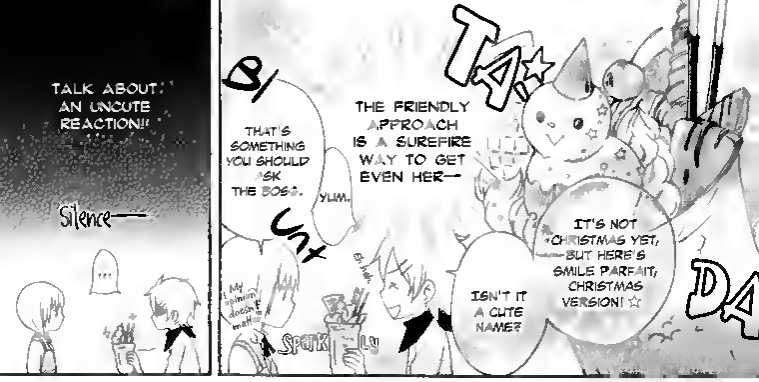
...
...YOU ARE TO CLAIM THE SMILE...
OF KOUMEDA HANA, A RESIDENT OF THE HUMAN WORLD


This is one helpful summon~
I WAS HOPING FOR SOMETHING MORE CHALLENGING.
WHAT A BORE
TOO BAD.
WHAT, THAT'S IT?! ISN'T THIS WAY TOO EASY?
IT'LL BE A SNAP
THIS GIRL IS JUST ANOTHER HUMAN

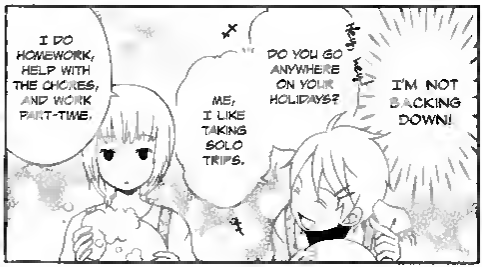
BUT ..
HEY
WHAT'S WITH THAT IN A WORK-PLACE?
OH, COME ON THINGS ARE SPICING UP, AREN'T THEY?♪
Ah, ha!
SWIP
SWIP
DOWNER

I'VE BEEN WATCHING HER FOR DAYS,
BUT SHE DOESN'T SMILE AT ALL.
...THE PROBLEM WAS
MY TARGET WOULDN'T SMILE
IT'S OK
LOOKS LIKE
I'M WASTING MY TIME HERE.
DOES SHE EVEN HAVE ANY FRIENDS?
NORMALLY, PEOPLE SMILE ONCE OR TWICE DURING A CONVERSATION.
You're munching too loud.
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
CRUNCH
THIS IS SAKURA-KUN, OUR NEW EMPLOYEE.
He's cute!
Nice to meet you!
MY ONLY OPTION IS MAKE HER SMILE MYSELF!!
CRASH
?!
Eek!
Smile
Hi. Nice to meet you.♡
Human version.
SHE REALLY SHOULD QUIT
Whisper
IT'S KOUMEDA-SAN AGAIN.
Whoa
Whisper

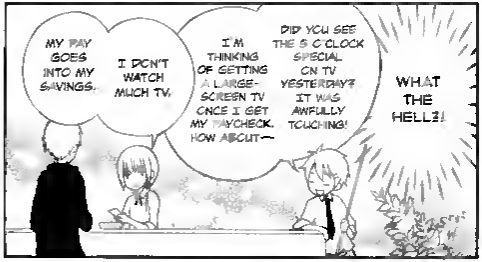
SO SHE'S A PATHETIC KLUTZ WITHOUT AN OUNCE OF CHARM
!
Glance
IF THAT'S THE CASE,
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO MAKE HER SMILE?
...
A REAL SHAME
IF SHE WOULD JUST SMILE, SHE MIGHT ACTUALLY LOOK PRET—
Gasp!
Koumeba-san!
Lunch, Lunch!
YES?
SO YOU CAN GRADUATE TOP OF THE CLASS!
ARGH!! WHO CARES ABOUT THAT?!
JUST HURRY AND MAKE HER SMILE...


TALK ABOUT AN UNCUTE REACTION!!
Silence——
...
Bi
THAT'S SOMETHING YOU SHOULD ASK THE BOSS.
THE FRIENDLY APPROACH IS A SUREFIRE WAY TO GET EVEN HER—
Ta☆
Unt
ylim.
My opinion doesn't matter
Sparkling
ISN'T IT A CUTE NAME?
IT'S NOT CHRISTMAS YET, BUT HERE'S SMILE PARFAIT, CHRISTMAS VERSION! ☆
DA

Sigh
Silence——
I SEE. BUSY LIFE.
Sorry! I like hunting fun
Issh——
Hmm


I DO HOMEWORK, HELP WITH THE CHORES, AND WORK PART-TIME.
ME, I LIKE TAKING SOLO TRIPS.
DO YOU GO ANYWHERE ON YOUR HOLIDAYS?
I'M NOT BACKING DOWN!

Uhing——
Thank you very much!

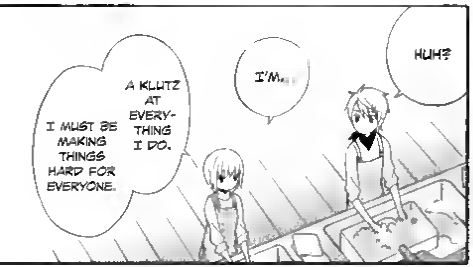

MY PAY GOES INTO MY SAVINGS.
I DON'T WATCH MUCH TV.
I'M THINKING OF GETTING A LARGE-SCREEN TV ONCE I GET MY PAYCHECK. HOW ABOUT—
DID YOU SEE THE 5 O'CLOCK SPECIAL ON TV YESTERDAY? IT WAS AWFULLY TOUCHING!
WHAT THE HELL?!

HOW ABOUT YOU USE MAGIC ON HER TO MAKE HER SMILE?
Or you can try tickling her. Oh, guess that would count as sexual harassment
I can't believe I'm getting nowhere
nunnh
nunnh
I hate her
Gloomy

...!
AH!!
THAT'S RIGHT!! I AM THE TOP STUDENT OF THE DEMON WORLD SCHOOL—
YEAH, THERE'S STILL THAT—
Spring
NO, I CAN'T USE MAGIC.
WHY NOT? IT SHOULD BE EASY FOR YOU
BETTER HURRY YOU DON'T HAVE THAT MANY DAYS—
FOR US,
THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE.
DEMONS
CAN'T USE MAGIC TO MAKE HUMANS HAPPY.
YEAH.
YOU GUYS ARE SUPPOSED TO MAKE THEM UNHAPPY.
A SMILE...
IS A SIGN OF HAPPINESS.
I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO MAKE DO WITHOUT MAGIC. IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO GO,
HUH.
Tingle

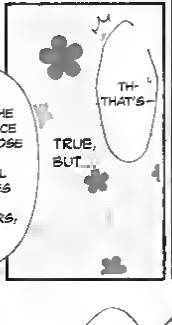
NOW THAT I THINK ABOUT IT...
I HAVEN'T ASKED HER THE ONE THING THAT'S BEEN BUGGING ME THE MOST
HEY, DOESN'T THAT GIRL CREEP YOU OUT? SHE'S TOTALLY GLOOMY.
YEAH, A LITTLE.
SHE NEEDS TO WORK ON HER ATTITUDE.
TRUE.
WHY SHE...
SO,
WHAT MADE YOU WORK HERE?
Zzssh
HUH?

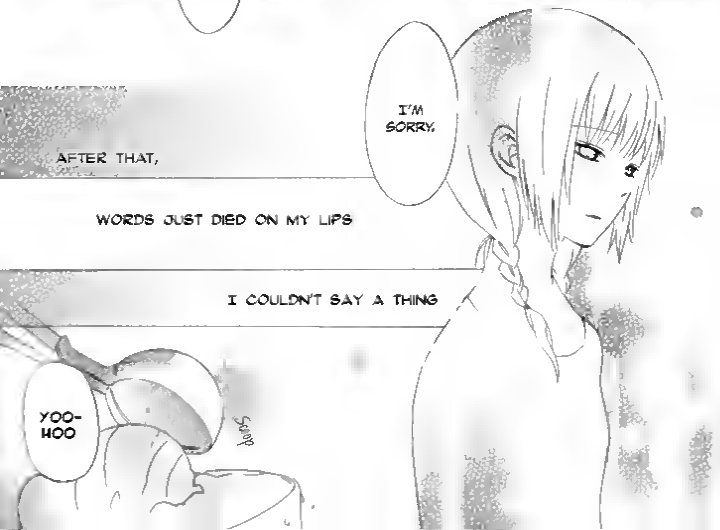
BECAUSE I LIVE NEARBY.
OH, OK.
Tush
WHY ARE YOU ASKING?
SHE RESPONDED!!
UH,
NO REASON JUST CURIOUS... IS ALL.
Huh?
Bubble
Tush
AND.
BECAUSE THIS PLACE IS NEXT TO THE HOSPITAL.
Thump
HUH?
THE HOSPITAL?
ARE YOU SICK OR SOMETHING?
MY MOTHER IS THERE.
I can visit her anytime.
AH, I SEE.
HER EXPRESSION
JUST A WHILE AGO...


I MUST BE MAKING THINGS HARD FOR EVERYONE.
A KLUTZ AT EVERY-THING I DO.
I'M...
HUH?

...WAS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT.
FROM HER USUAL ONE
I'M SORRY.

SO I.
THIS IS THE ONLY PLACE THAT'S CLOSE TO THE HOSPITAL AND HIRES HIGH SCHOOLERS,


TH-THAT'S-
TRUE, BUT...


I'M SORRY.
AFTER THAT,
WORDS JUST DIED ON MY LIPS
I COULDN'T SAY A THING
YOO-HOO
Sasa

ONLY 2 DAYS LEFT
Ashidaka sensei desu
Sensei
I KNOW, I KNOW SHUT UP.
STOP POPPING OUT!
WHAT?
YOU CAN'T BE SERIOUS!
WHAT'S WRONG?
YOU SEE, A BUNCH OF TROUBLE-MAKERS FROM A HIGH SCHOOL NEARBY JUST CAME IN.
The boss isn't around, either
AND THE ONE WHO WENT TO TAKE THEIR ORDER—
IS KOUMEDA-SAN!
Uh,
THIS IS A NON-SMOK-
WHA?!
COME AGAIN?
Ah ha ha ha
Cruelty hearts!
Uh...
SAY, GIVE US YOUR ADDRESS, YOU STILL IN HIGH SCHOOL?
WHEN DID YOU START WORKING HERE, BABY?♪
Sly smirk
HELLO?
YOO-HOO, MISSY? FREE CUSTOMER SERVICE, PLEASE?
A smile is free, right?
Ah ha ha ha!

POUR
FREE WATER, AT YOUR SERVICE!♡
WE'RE SORRY... TO KEEP YOU WAITING, SIRS!
Oh.
BY THE WAY, THIS CAFÉ IS A NON-SMOKING AREA.
COULD YOU PLEASE TAKE YOUR ENJOYMENT OUTSIDE?
!
Hold this for me
I'LL BE BACK SOON.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.
SAKURA-KUN!
SA-
WHAT...
THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?!
Clatter!!!
Mutter
COME SEE US BEHIND THE CAFÉ!!

BE THANKFUL WE'RE NOT BEATING YOU UP INSIDE, YOU LOUSY LITTLE PART-TIMER!
Aren't we nice?
Muah ha ha ha!
WE'RE CONSIDERATE ENOUGH TO GO TO THE BACK OF THE CAFÉ.
Smile
Thank you for letting me have a full Blast.
Laith
Yes.
I DON'T HAVE TIME TO CLEAN UP THE MESS FROM YOUR LITTLE FIRE GAMES, EITHER, FELLAS.
Hehe!
Swoosh
LET'S GET THIS OVER WITH!
OH? ALL RIGHT
Skid
Crack
WHAT'S THAT, A WATER GUN?
WE DON'T HAVE TIME TO PLAY WATER GAMES WITH YOU, KIDDO.

HEY!
WHERE'D HE GO?
AS IF I DON'T HAVE ENOUGH PROBLEMS!
STOP MAKING IT EVEN MORE IMPOSSIBLE FOR HER TO SMILE,
YOU HUMAN SCUM!

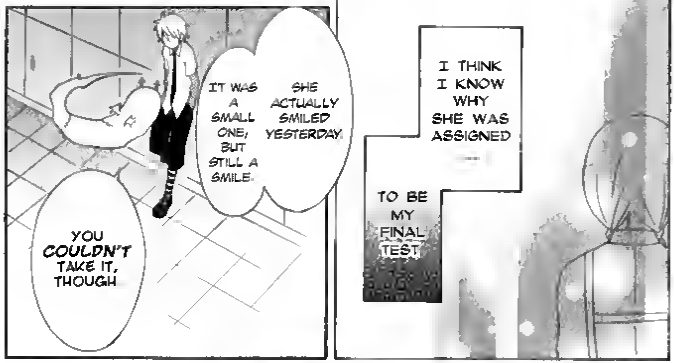
Bo Bo Bo
GET
SHEESH.
BUNCH OF PRICKS.
SIGH
SORRY FOR GOING OFF IN THE MIDDLE-
I UNDERSTAND IT'S NOT EASY FOR YOU, WITH YOUR FAMILY SITUATION AND ALL.
Pat
BUT IF YOU CAUSE ANOTHER SCENE,
I'LL HAVE TO ASK YOU TO QUIT.
AH, YOU SUCKED UP THEIR ANGER?
Quiver
Quiver
Figures
Hey why were we mad?
Dum

I CAN'T LET HER QUIT! ALL MY HARD WORK—
IT'S FINE.
Grab
BOSS, YOU'VE GOT IT ALL WRONG! I WAS THE ONE—
B-
Stunned
I'M SORRY.
EVEN THOUGH
THIS IS MY PROBLEM,
IT'S AS THOUGH
I LIVE WITH MY RELATIVES BECAUSE MY PARENTS ARE AS GOOD AS GONE.
MY FATHER DIVORCED MY MOTHER AND WALKED OUT ON US WHEN I WAS IN GRADE SCHOOL.
Zzzzh
MY MOTHER...

. IS SICK–
BED-RIDDEN.
Zssh—
clatter
AFTER MY FATHER LEFT, MY MOTHER WAS SUNK IN DEPRESSION.
I COULDN'T BEAR TO WATCH.
I TRIED DESPERATELY TO MAKE HER SMILE.
I WOULD TELL HER ANYTHING INTERESTING THAT HAPPENED AT SCHOOL,
GET GOOD GRADES, HELP WITH THE CHORES, THINGS LIKE THAT
I THOUGHT IF I ACTED CHEERFUL, SHE WOULD SMILE BACK AT ME.
BUT SHE SAID TO ME,
"YOUR SMILE REMINDS ME OF HIM. IT IS PAINFUL."
SO ..

AT THAT TIME, IT WAS ALL I COULD DO,
BUT GRADUALLY,
I GREW AFRAID OF SMILING.
I COULD NO LONGER SMILE...
I FORGOT HOW TO...
AND GAVE UP.
EVER SINCE THEN...
I STOPPED SMILING...
EVEN IF I FORCE MYSELF TO SMILE, MY FEELINGS WON'T CHANGE.
THAT'S THE REALITY OF THE SITUATION.
"IF THEY INSIST ON HATING ME..."

"...THEN I'LL JUST..."
SAKURA-KUN...
YEAH?!
I'M SORRY FOR TELLING YOU ALL THIS
BUT I FEEL A BIT BETTER NOW.
THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.
AH
I SEE NOW.
NO PROB-LEM.


I THINK I KNOW WHY SHE WAS ASSIGNED TO BE MY FINAL TEST
SHE ACTUALLY SMILED YESTERDAY.
IT WAS A SMALL ONE, BUT STILL A SMILE.
YOU COULDN'T TAKE IT, THOUGH

JIROU, ISN'T THERE SOMETHING YOU WANT TO TELL HER?
YOU'RE CONFUSED IT SHOWS
WELL...
BUT IF YOU TELL HER, YOUR DEMON RANK IS SURE TO DROP

LET ME TELL YOU THIS, NOT AS A DEMON'S PARTNER,
BUT AS A FRIEND
ENOUGH ALREADY!
IF YOU'VE NOTICED IT, JUST FREAKING TELL HER!! YOU CAN'T KEEP IT BOTTLED INSIDE FOREVER!!
OR ELSE
YOU'LL END UP NOT BEING ABLE TO SMILE, EITHER!!

I...
KOUMEDA-SAN,
Close
Good job!
IS THERE ...
ANYTHING YOU'RE KEEPING FROM ME?
EH?
BEING INSECURE ...
IT WAS THE ONLY THING I KNEW HOW TO DO.
SAKURA-KUN WAS THE ONLY ONE
WHO DID A PERFECT REPORT ON THE PREVIOUS MONSTER STUDY.

FROM NOW ON,
ALL OF YOU SHOULD LEARN FROM HIS EXAMPLE AND STUDY HARDER!!
UM,
YOU ARE A TRULY BRIGHT STUDENT, SAKURA-KUN! I'M VERY PROUD OF YOU!
THANK YOU.
SA~ KU~ RA.
LET ME COPY YOUR HOMEWORK IT'S DUE TOMORROW.
BUT THAT'S--
IF YOU DON'T TELL, THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANY PROBLEM.
COME ON, DUDE.
WE'RE NOT AS SMART AS YOU.
DON'T BE STINGY.
BUT...
IT WON'T DO YOU ANY GOOD.
YOU SHOULDN'T-
WHOA.

STICK IN THE MUD.
LET'S NOT BULLY MR. GOODY-GOODY HERE.
Cuuun.
SAKURA-KUN IS TOTALLY SUCKING UP TO THE TEACHERS.
EVERYBODY LOVES LITTLE GOODY-TWO-SHOES
JUST BECAUSE HE GETS GOOD GRADES.
I'M ALWAYS COMPARED TO HIM.
CAN'T GET ALONG WITH HIM.
SHOULD I DO AS YOU GUYS SAY THEN?
I'D SAY IT'S ALL SUPER-FICIAL.
Ah ha ha ha!
MUST BE
THAT'S WHY I HATE SMART ALECKS
THEY'RE CALCU-LATING
HE PROBABLY LOOKS DOWN ON US.
Ah ha ha!

WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?
WHAT'S WRONG WITH TAKING THINGS SERIOUSLY?
I DO WHAT I THINK IS RIGHT BECAUSE I WANT TO BE FRIENDS WITH YOU GUYS.
I ONLY...
IT SURE GROSSES YOU OUT...
WHEN SOMEBODY PRETENDS TO BE NICE TO YOU
FINE.
ONLY...

"EVERYBODY EXCEPT ME IS AN IDIOT."
"WHO NEEDS TO HANG OUT WITH THEM."
"I'M GIFTED!"
I'LL BE...
THE KIND OF GUY YOU EXPECT ME TO BE.
"I CAN DO EVERYTHING...
ON MY OWN."
WILL YOU BE HAPPY THEN?
...
SHEESH.
CAN'T MIX WITH THEM LOSERS, EH?
They're all playing outside.
STUDYING AGAIN?
COURSE.

"...ONLY WANTED TO SMILE."

I KNEW

I... I ALREADY TOLD YOU YESTERDAY
YOU JUST...
HAVE NO CONFIDENCE IN YOURSELF,
SO YOU MAKE UP AN EXCUSE, BLAME IT ON SOMEBODY ELSE.
YOU'RE JUST RUNNING AWAY...
FROM YOUR TRUE FEELINGS
I...
I'M NOT THE KIND OF PERSON WHO'S GOOD AT EVERYTHING LIKE YOU, SAKURA-KUN...
SO
BEING COMPETENT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.
...THAT...
I'M JUST LIKE YOU.
TELL ME THE TRUTH, KOUMEDA-SAN.
YOU WERE JUST PROTECTING...

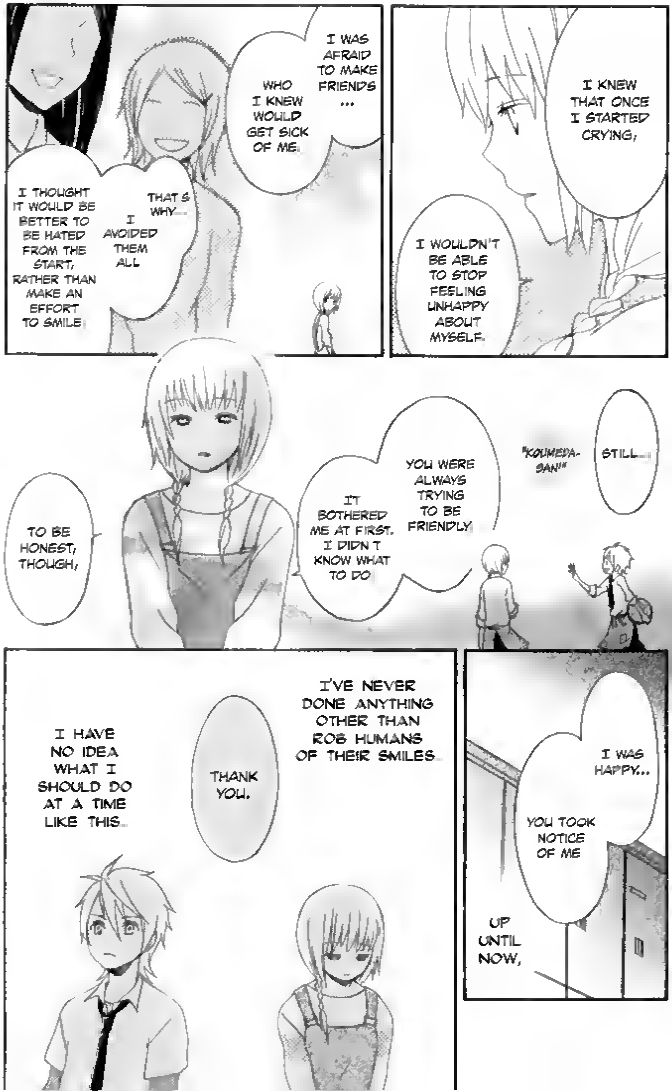
...YOUR LONELY, WEAK, MISERABLE SELF.

IN ORDER TO HIDE IT,

FEELING AFRAID AND NOT WANTING TO GET HURT,

YOU TURNED YOUR BACK ON EVERYTHING.

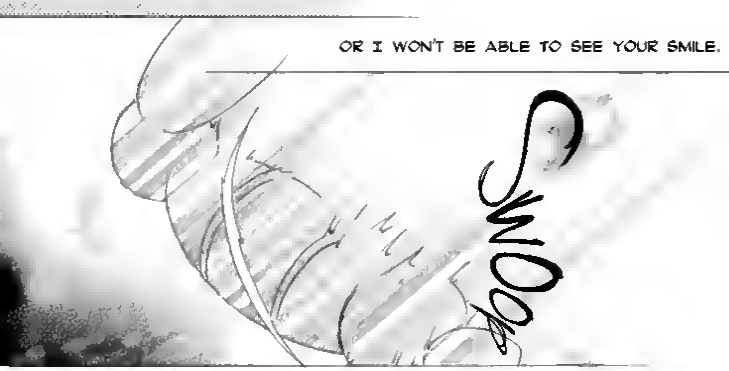
I KNOW, BECAUSE WE'RE THE SAME.
LET'S TRY... TO REMEMBER HOW TO DO IT.
IF YOU DON'T SMILE, MISS
IT'S A WASTE OF A PRETTY FACE,
YOU CAN'T SMILE ALONE.
WHEN MY MOTHER WAS HOSPITALIZED, I PROMISED MYSELF I WOULD NOT COMPLAIN
I DIDN'T WANT TO BE A BURDEN TO OTHERS
NOT IF I COULD HELP IT


I WAS AFRAID TO MAKE FRIENDS ...
WHO I KNEW WOULD GET SICK OF ME.
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE BETTER TO BE HATED FROM THE START, RATHER THAN MAKE AN EFFORT TO SMILE.
THAT'S WHY... I AVOIDED THEM ALL
I KNEW THAT ONCE I STARTED CRYING,
I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO STOP FEELING UNHAPPY ABOUT MYSELF.
TO BE HONEST, THOUGH,
IT BOTHERED ME AT FIRST. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
YOU WERE ALWAYS TRYING TO BE FRIENDLY.
"KOUMEDA-SAN!"
STILL...
I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT I SHOULD DO AT A TIME LIKE THIS.
THANK YOU.
I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING OTHER THAN ROB HUMANS OF THEIR SMILES.
I WAS HAPPY...
YOU TOOK NOTICE OF ME
UP UNTIL NOW,

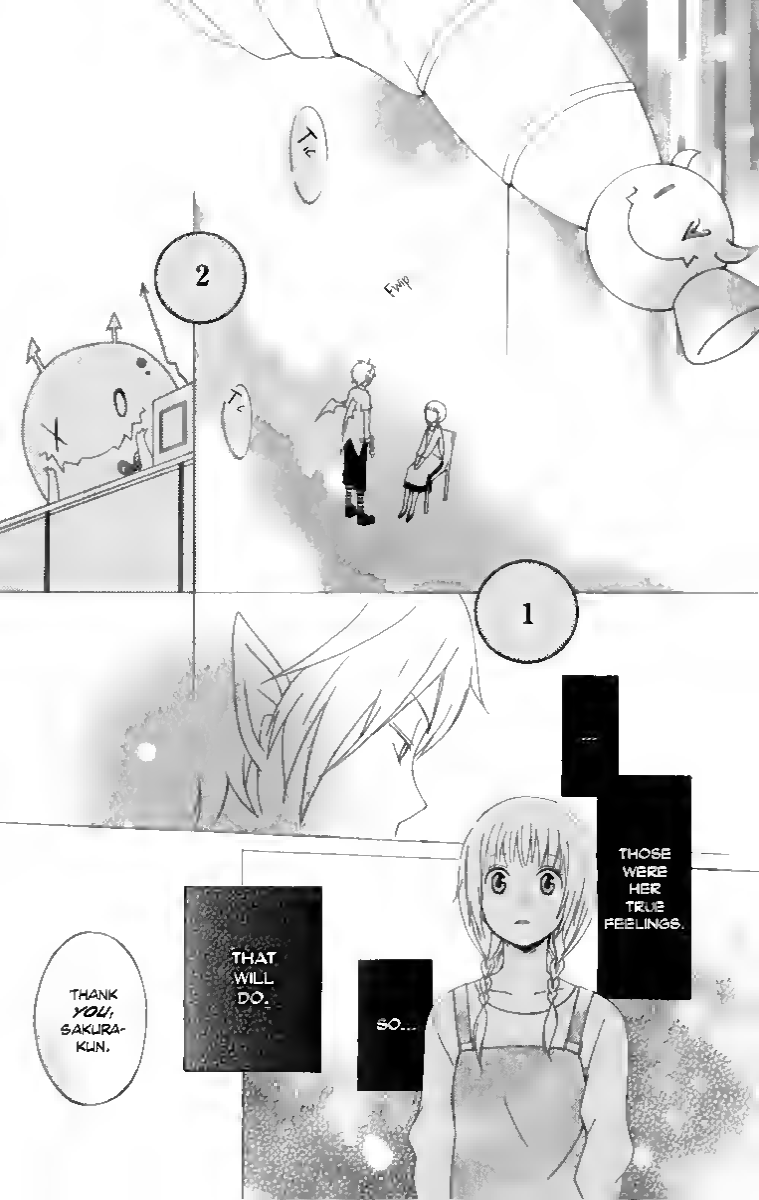
THOSE WORDS ...
AREN'T SUPPOSED TO COME WITH TEARS, RIGHT?
...
THANK YOU.
...
S-SEE? YOU CAN TOO SMILE.

I HAVE TO FACE FORWARD—

OR I WON'T BE ABLE TO SEE YOUR SMILE.



LATCH
5
4
3

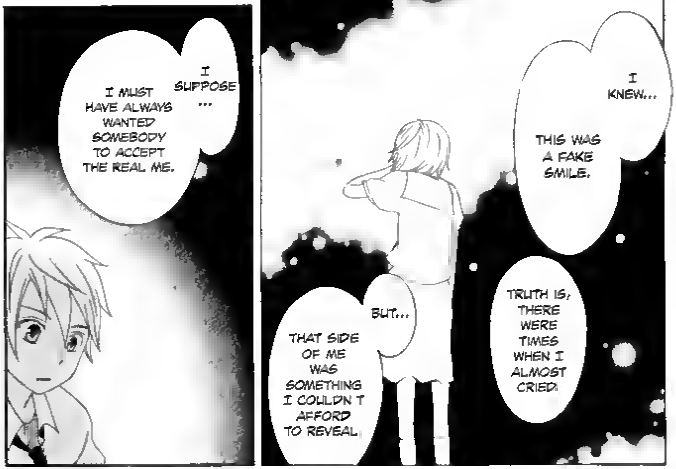

THANK YOU, SAKURA-KUN.
THAT WILL DO.
SO...
...
THOSE WERE HER TRUE FEELINGS.
1
2
FWIP

GR
IN
And...
Sorry!
HUH?
BON
THE FINAL EXAMINATION HAS ENDED.
SW
OOSH
?!
HUH?
WH-
WHAT?!

WHAT?!
TIME'S UP!
FINAL EXAM MISSION "PREVENT THE TOP STUDENT OF THE DEMON WORLD FROM PASSING HIS EXAM"
ACCOMPLISHED WITH A FLOURISH! ♡
AN ANGEL?!
WHY IS THERE ONE HERE?
NOW I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT NOT GRADUATING TOMORROW!
?!!
THANKS FOR YOUR HELP, HANA-CHAN! ♡
I WAS SO NERVOUS!
AN ANGEL
...
GRADUATE
...
...!!!
hugs

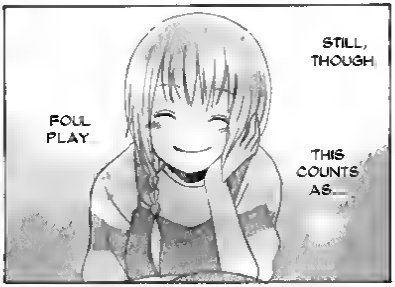
~~!!
YIKES! LATER, HANA-CHAN!!
H-HOW DARE YOU TRICK ME!!!
THE SCHOOL IN THE CELESTIAL WORLD IS HAVING ITS FINALS, TOO?!
THAT MEANS...
Zip
I THOUGHT YOU'D BE ANGRY.
Damn you, angel!!
Y-YOU...
I'VE BEEN HAD...
You knew what I was going to do, didn't you?
Dejected
SO I CHANGED MY JOB AND ACTED ALL GLOOMY.
IT WAS HARD.
Still...
SO YOU'RE SAYING. .
That angel told me.
BUT I WAS TOLD THAT IF I SMILED, UM, YOU WOULD STEAL MY SMILE
UM, I'M REALLY SORRY
ALL OF IT WAS A LIE?
EVERY-THING...
THAT STORY YOU GAVE ME—

...
NO, I WAS TELLING THE TRUTH.
MY FATHER DID DIVORCE MY MOTHER.
MY MOTHER REALLY IS SICK.
ONLY ...
THAT PART ABOUT NOT SMILING WAS UNTRUE.
MY MOTHER SAID,
"I MAY CRY FROM TIME TO TIME, BUT YOU SHOULD ALWAYS SMILE."
THAT ...
WAS WHAT SHE REALLY TOLD ME
THAT'S WHY I KEPT SMILING, EVEN WHEN I WAS SAD OR HAVING A HARD TIME.
I ONLY SHOWED MY FRIENDS MY CHEERFUL SIDE.
IT WASN'T ALL THAT DIFFICULT. AS LONG AS IT COULD HELP MY MOTHER...
BUT...
YOU WANT TO SMILE, DON'T YOU?

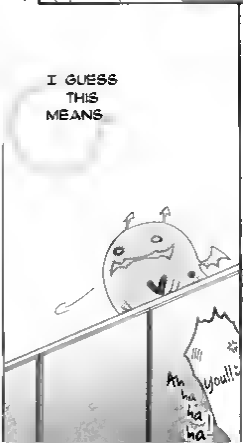

I SUPPOSE ...
I MUST HAVE ALWAYS WANTED SOMEBODY TO ACCEPT THE REAL ME.
I KNEW...
THIS WAS A FAKE SMILE.
TRUTH IS, THERE WERE TIMES WHEN I ALMOST CRIED.
BUT...
THAT SIDE OF ME WAS SOMETHING I COULDN'T AFFORD TO REVEAL.

I'M JUST LIKE YOU.
I COULDN'T HELP... MADE ME SO HAPPY,
WHAT YOU TOLD ME... EVEN IF IT WAS JUST AN ACT,
LET'S TRY...
TO REMEMBER HOW TO SMILE
...! AHEAD OF TIME BUT SMILE ...

ALL ALONG—
THAT I WAS A DEMON THAT I WAS LYING AND THE REASON I WAS FRIENDLY TO HER—
EVERY-THING
THANK YOU.
THIS GIRL—
IS SLICK
SHE KNEW



Appeared in *Monthly Shōwaru Gangan* January 2007



...THE KLUTZY LITTLE DEMON...
IS ONE UP ON THE SAVVY DEMON.
HAVING FAILED HIS EXAMINATION
SAKURA KOUJIROU WAS HELD BACK ANOTHER YEAR.
IT'S YOUR FAULT i—
I KNOW!! LET'S LOOK FOR A NEW JOB TOGETHER, KAY?
Ack—
LOOKS LIKE I CAN'T STAY HERE ANY LONGER.
Ha ha ha
Gotta find a new job!
WHAT ABOUT YOU, SAKURA-KUN?
~~~YOU SHAMELESS LITTLE—
~~~

Afterword

Smile "Cure"
Aha!
Made it myself
Greetings from the window
Mad
She's actually incensed
Gyu
Bwa ha ha ha
Slow
Maid?
Freeload

Kurenai Oji
Kid Jinnu
Izumi is actually her surname.
tall
short
Unruly hair
Jinnu's hair always puts up a battle
A rough sketch of an alternate uniform.
Crunch Crunch
The school uniform was white before the series started.
Hana-nee belongs to everybody!
Hee
Hah

GREETINGS
no, that I would have a shot at doing a series—
It never crossed my mind that I would be able to continue writing about these kids—
no, no, that I would actually become a mangaka— (the list goes on)
SITTING UPRIGHT
I was able to make it this far because of you, my readers
Thank you very much!
Thank you for picking up my unexpected and first book
Hello, everyone I'm Kuwahara Souta
I'm still an Under trained rookie who hasn't even begun to understand the M in "mangaka", but I will be putting all my passion and effort into this each time, so please don't give up on me
OK!
And so I've become friends with all-nighters
That's right
It's so easy to ruin yourself
You used to be fit too
Keep early hours please
Hg
Hg
Thanks to the support from everyone around me and the carrot and stick approach my editor uses, I'm still here and standing, despite myself
Having pushed my way here with passion alone, I challenge myself on a daily basis
Quiver
Whisper
I think. I may be... sleepy.
Quiver
you are sleepy

Special Thanks!

- Kanaka-san
- Nomura-san
- All my family members
- Those who have been supporting me
- My editor Kimura-san

Thank you so much!

May we meet again
in the next volume!

kuRENai ouji

Volume 1

Translation: Kurenai
Scans: Ink
Editing: Ink (ch1-2+pilot) & MelYanna (ch3)
Proofreading: Conner

#clo@ircirchighway.net
cl-cactera.net